

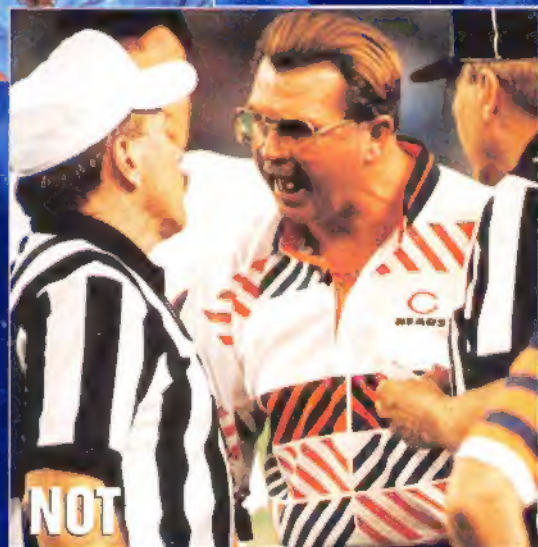
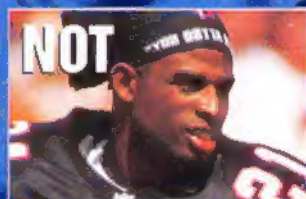
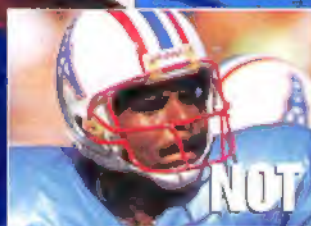
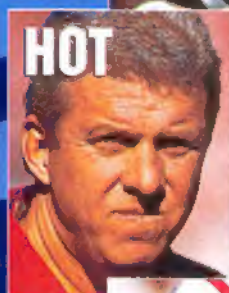
What's HOT  
and What's NOT  
In the NFL

INSIDE

# SPORTS

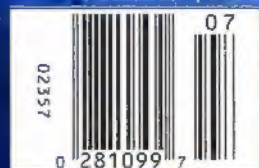
July 1993

# What's Hot & What's Not in the NFL



■ **IN:** Free agency, and fresh coaches  
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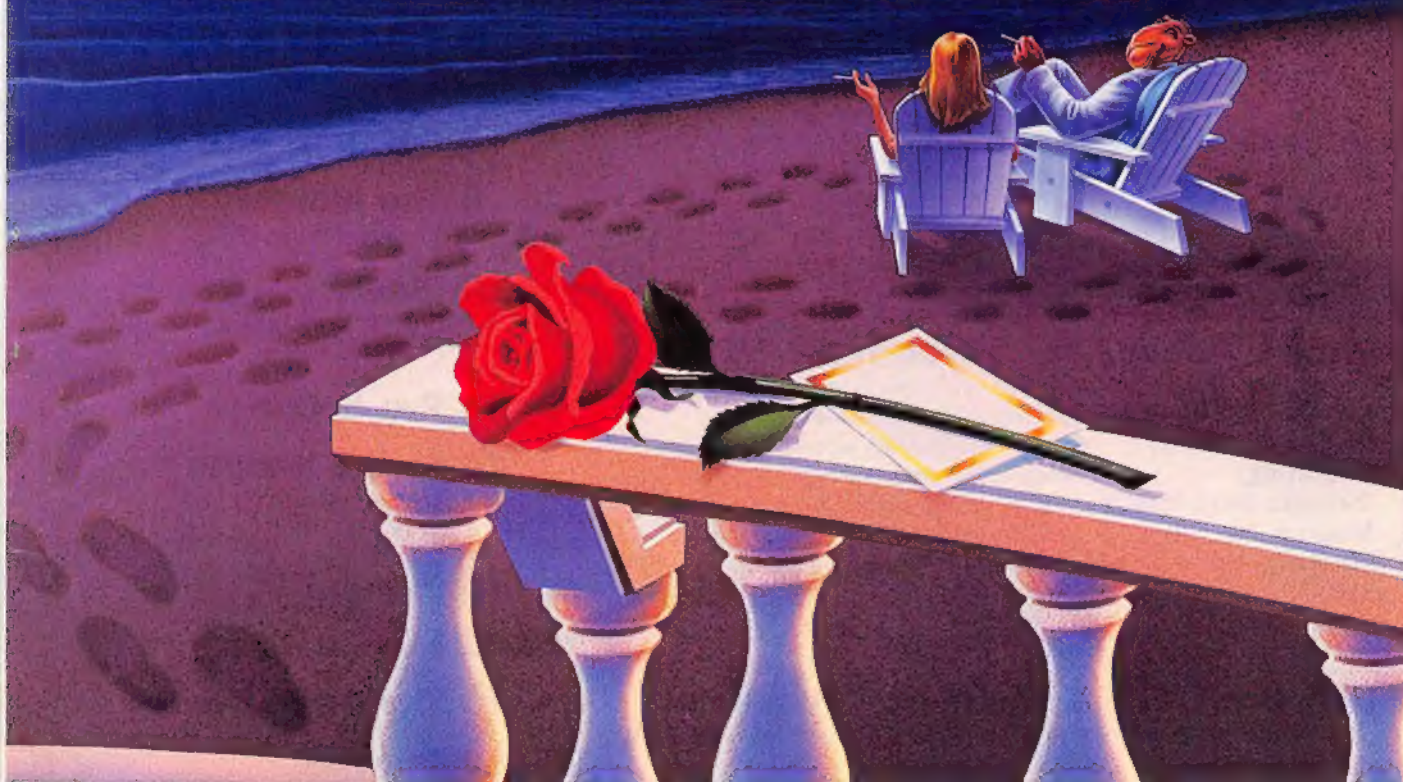


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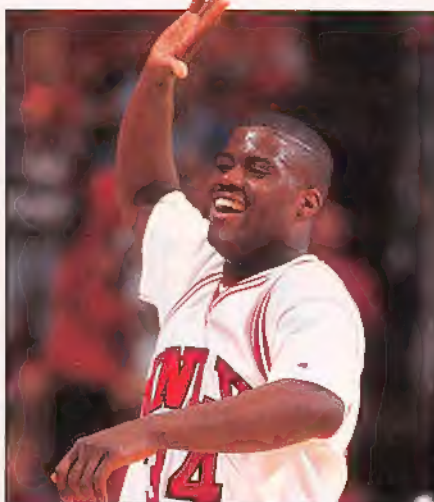
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*by Joe*

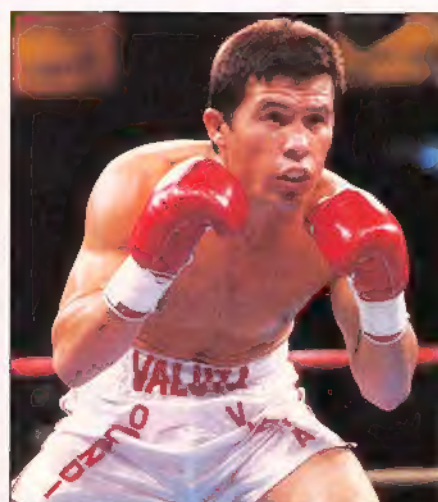




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## EDITOR'S NOTE

**A**ND NOW, THE REST OF THE story...I thought it might be a good idea this month to give you a behind-the-scenes look at one of our stories. Last year we sent football writer Ed Werder to Tampa to talk to Buccaneers coach Sam Wyche for our monthly Q&A feature. In our minds, the resulting

"Inside Interview"—loose and free-wheeling, yet provocative and revealing—was one of the better interviews we've ever done, and we give most of the credit for that to Werder, 32, who has been covering football for the past 10 years. So when Ed gave us a call and suggested a Q&A with Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin, we immediately went forward with the plans.

The interview was conducted at Cowboys Cafe, which is located near the team's practice facility in Irving, Texas. Werder admits he didn't always have Irvin's undivided attention; numerous players came in and interrupted the interview to talk with the star wideout, who apparently has quite a bit of clout with some of his teammates.

"After I finished this interview," Werder says, "I was trying to get hold of Emmitt Smith because I had heard the Dolphins were pursuing him. As a last resort I tried Michael, and I got him on his car phone as he was going to play in a charity basketball game." Irvin told Werder, "Emmitt is in the car behind me," and then proceeded to try to get Smith to pull over at the next rest stop.

Werder then mentioned that he also was trying to contact Kelvin Martin, who reportedly was being wooed by the Seahawks. Irvin replied, "Oh, Kelvin's sitting right beside me." Ed laughs as he recalls the situation: "Here's Michael brokering these other players to me. I interviewed Kelvin courtesy of Michael."

Werder covers the Cowboys for *The Dallas Morning News*, and he says he definitely has seen the best and worst of Irvin. "He shouted at me in the locker room last season," Ed recalls, "but for this interview he was in a more gentle mood, willing to discuss his upbringing and his innermost thoughts. He is moody

at times, and he's got some of that Jimmy Johnson manipulative ability about him. He's also got a great wit and a sense of humor."

After you read Werder's interview with Irvin, which begins on page 22, we think you'll get the sense that Michael is in control of his life—that he has a direction he wants his life to be headed in, on and off the field. "He's got a lot of PR savvy," Ed says. "He understands the impor-

tance of marketing himself, and he was willing to sit down for as long as I wanted to talk about things he maybe had not talked about candidly before. He has a tendency to be outspoken on some things, and he's very witty and sharp. Those skills are envied by other players."

One of the subjects Irvin discusses is the importance of team togetherness on the Cowboys, the idea that the only people who can beat the Cowboys are themselves. Werder, however, doesn't feel that's much of a problem right now. "When a team wins a Super Bowl, you always have to wonder how it will react: Will the players be overcome by petty jealousies? Will they all go out and write a book about it? This team is truly unique because the success hasn't seemed to affect it yet."



**On the field and in his life, Irvin is in the driver's seat.**

JEFF BAKER

*Vince Aversano*

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## Law

# Seaver's Bad Pitch

ON AUGUST 17, 1989, TOWARD the end of a local broadcast of a Yankees game for WPIX in New York, Hall-of-Famer Tom Seaver read the following announcement, a type that should be familiar to anyone who watches baseball on TV: "Participating advertisers in New York Yankees baseball are...your local Mazda dealer..."

One month later, the New York-area Oldsmobile dealers, with whom Seaver had an exclusive agreement, terminated his contract and refused to pay him for a second year of services on the grounds that his reading of the "billboard" of sponsors—that portion of the broadcast where the sponsors are identified and their logos appear on-screen—constituted conduct that was harmful to Oldsmobile and thus violated the terms of his contract.

Seaver eventually sued, and the case has focused attention on a growing problem for athletes, broadcasters, and their agents: cross-promotion. Today sports figures frequently wear many hats—endorser, broadcaster, corporate "goodwill ambassador"—and when talent has conflicting obligations to competing products, exactly what behavior is permissible on behalf of each company?

The deal Seaver signed with Oldsmobile allowed him to appear in radio or TV programs but specifically prohibited him from doing commercials or their introductions or follow-ups—called "lead-ins" and "lead-outs"—for another automobile. According to his attorney, Howard Berman, Seaver scrupulously adhered to the terms of his contract through 150 hours of Yankees broadcasts in

1989, except on the one occasion that led to the dispute. In essence, Seaver claimed that reading the billboard didn't breach the contract.

New York State Supreme Court Justice Peter Tom disagreed. While he found that "Seaver's one-time, off-camera, hasty reading of a list of sponsors...was not a personal endorsement of any kind" on behalf of Mazda, Justice Tom



Not everybody thinks Tom is so terrific.

ruled that Seaver neglected his obligation not to "publicize a competitive product" or take any action that might injure Oldsmobile in the marketplace.

## Media

# Monday Night Maneuvers

**I**GNORE THE RUMORS. Howard Cosell never picked the teams that appear on ABC's "Monday Night Football"—and neither did Jimmy the Greek. The NFL determines who plays on Monday nights and every other night and afternoon. The networks, which paid a total of \$3.6 billion for TV rights to the

games, may control the cash, but the league controls the schedule.

Each spring schedule makers line up traditional rivalries, such as the Redskins-Giants, and matchups that, based on records from the previous season, may have national interest. Those games are divvied up between Sunday and Monday night.

Of course, "MNF" gets the best games. After all, not only is it on a network as opposed to cable, but the games air during prime time, which means big ratings. Says NFL vice president of broadcasting Val Pinchbeck, "Everyone knows a successful 'Monday Night Football' season has a rub-off effect on the rest of the season."

The '93 "MNF" lineup could be its best ever, because the '93 season is the last before contract negotiations between the NFL

and the TV networks. The league thinks if it hands out enough golden games to the networks—in this case, ABC—the networks, in return, will sign over even more money than last time. In truth, though, ABC may be the only network willing to cough up more cash, specifically to keep the Monday night institution.

At any rate, "MNF" has produced a good deal of trivia over the years. Here's a taste of it:


- The Dolphins have made the most "MNF" appearances, 44, and the Raiders have the best record, 29-10-1. The Redskins are third in Monday night games, checking in at 21-19.
- The biggest audience for a game in "MNF" history watched the Dolphins beat the Bears on December 2, 1985. The show scored a 29.6 rating.
- The NFL won't allow teams to make more than three "MNF" appearances in a season, and the opening game almost always kicks off with the reigning Super Bowl champ.—Liz Comte



MARC PISCOTTY

ABC's love for cash-cow "MNF" could put the network on the defensive in contract negotiations.





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is not to offend."**

*Chuck Norris*



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use the Olympic team's images. To avoid problems, all the player representatives met beforehand with sponsors, under the auspices of NBA and Olympic officials, and matched athletes with products they could endorse. For example, Michael Jordan, who endorses Wheaties cereal, didn't appear on the Kellogg's Corn Flakes box with Bird and other Olympians. Still, despite the best efforts of all concerned, a controversy still arose when athletes under contract to Nike refused to wear official warmups emblazoned with the Reebok logo.

If the Seaver decision is upheld, Mandel says, the impact on "personality" endorsement contracts could be significant. If product sponsors can dismiss athletes for something as essentially trivial as reading a billboard for a competing product, the athlete ultimately will be less marketable. Mandel thinks the Seaver ruling could have "a chilling effect" on other endorsements because in time the advertisers will forget the particular circumstances surrounding his dismissal: "All they'll remember," Mandel says, "is 'Seaver' and 'fired.'"—Linda J. Cohen

## Deals

## Polishing the Diamond Image

EARLIER THIS YEAR, MAJOR League Baseball, concerned that it wasn't getting enough bang for its buck on the marketing of its players, called in one of the big guns. Creative Artist Agency. Chicago White Sox vice chairman Eddie Einhorn met with the Los Angeles-based agency—which produces commercials for such high-pow-

ered sponsors as Coca-Cola, Apple Computer, and Nike—to see if its Hollywood connections could help clean up baseball's sagging image.

Though no formal deal between the league and CAA appears imminent, the word is out: Baseball is concerned about the reputation of its players. "We'd like to have a more positive sport to promote," Einhorn admits.

It's true that baseball players have a tough time getting commercial work off the field. One

## Update

## Luxury vs. the Long Ball

THEY SAY IT'S AN ILL wind that blows no one good, but Boston Red Sox fans may have a legitimate reason to shake their fists at the sky. With a ballpark long regarded as a home run haven, the Bosox have built their team around powerhitting, mostly right-handed sluggers in the mold of Dick Stuart, Carlton Fisk, Rico Petrocelli, Jim Rice, George Scott, Dwight Evans, and Ellis Burks. But since 1989, when the press box area at hallowed Fenway Park was replaced by the 600 Club and a new press box was added on top of that, players have struggled to knock one over the Green Monster—total home runs at Fenway have dropped in three of the four seasons since '89—and the reason may be blowin' in the wind.

Driven by concern for the home team and curiosity about the laws of physics, a group of students led by MIT aeronautics professor Paul Lagace, a diehard Sox fan (is there any other kind?), created a miniature model of Fenway and began to experiment with wind tunnels, simulating the wind currents typical of a balmy summer night at the ballpark. According to Lagace, the renovations at Fenway—which began with the installation of an electronic

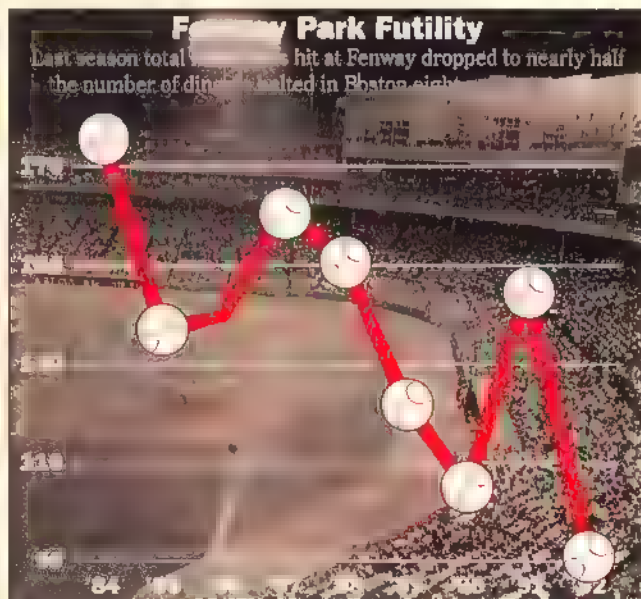
scoreboard in '76 and includes piecemeal additions, starting in '82 and continuing for several years, of luxury boxes behind home plate—have changed the air flow through the stadium so that it actually inhibits the carry on a fly ball.

Without delving into technical discussions of vortexes and windstreams, the bottom line is the players have to hit the ball about 10 feet higher than before to get it into the air current that will carry it out of the park. If the ball is any lower than that, the wind that sweeps off the luxury boxes will actually knock it down. "Anyone who uses the wall extensively is going to be frustrated," says Lagace. He points out that the situation also could

play in the Sox's favor because the wind is doing the same thing to the opponents' balls. "This could have prevented Bucky Dent's pop fly home run in 1978," he says wistfully, referring to the unlikely homer by the Yankees shortstop that sank the Sox in a one-game AL East playoff that year. "Maybe we could have won that game."

Though the Red Sox dispute his findings, Lagace isn't letting the issue rest. He's currently working on a way to weaken the vortex that's causing all the trouble. "If you decrease the strength of the vortex you can increase home run production," he says.

Most fans will agree that the Red Sox could use all the help they can get.—L.C.



factor is that with 24 players on a team, often no more than one or two stand out, but more importantly, baseball players often have a lousy reputation with advertising and corporate types. Well-publicized peccadillos such as drinking, doing drugs, womanizing, brawling, and griping at management and at one another in the press don't do much for their commercial appeal—and spitting sunflower seeds all over the dugout and chewing tobacco on the mound doesn't help, either.

"If stories come out that one guy does something, the impression is that they're all doing it," says Daisy Sinclair, vice president of casting at Ogilvy & Mather, a New York ad agency. "That's why we like guys like Nolan Ryan, who's had a long, clean career."

The veteran pitcher works off the field for Advil, Southwest Air, Wrangler, Justin, and Nike. "He's got all the values advertisers like," Sinclair says. "He's a family man and a nice person." Baseball surely wishes that all of its players could be like Ryan.—L.C.



"Court Jester" (cont'd from before)  
Down Under Open, it became clear that Karl was more than a world-class tennis player; he was a truly gifted comedian. It was strange, but even his opponents found his antics amusing during a match. Amid the tirades and fluorescent flamboyance of the rest of the players on the tour, Karl Zoomigofast was a breath of fresh air.

I remember watching him at the PayDay Candy Bar Golden Caramel Championships and thinking that he had missed his calling. Certainly, his tennis was flawless; he possessed natural skills — a booming serve that was complemented by a stunning, 97% first-serve percentage, a high, looping forehand that could be placed with radar-like accuracy, and a ballistic backhand that was the envy of every player on the tour. Indeed, Karl's tennis was superb. But his comedic skills were far superior. I mean, anybody who could walk onto centre court at Wimbledon sporting a Groucho moustache, formal tails had to have something special.

Of course, anybody who's totally nuts enough to have read this far deserves some kind of reward. Here goes: a very cool and very exclusive PayDay MTV

September 2nd. PayDay's an official sponsor. But you knew that, right? Now, back to the extremely interesting (writer's opinion) "Court Jester."

Karl, of course, did have his detractors. Surprisingly, most were his doubles partners. Ewe Schmilsson, the somewhat adept Swiss player, was paired with Karl during the recent PayDay Candy Bar Open in Stockholm. Ewe's stoic, court-side manner was ruffled when Karl walked onto the court dressed in Lederhosen and boots, carrying not a racquet, but a butterfly net, and singing a mangled version of Monty Python's "Lumberjack Song." Naturally, the crowd immediately took Karl into their hearts. The opponents lost it when they saw Karl begin calling out the scores in broken Swiss. They simply laid down their racquets, fell to their knees in tears, and eventually had to forfeit the match on account of uncontrollable laughter. Still, Ewe was not amused.

Karl's schedule is a never-ending rally between tennis courts and comedy clubs.

"Y'know, it's actually kind of cool to be back here in Wisconsin," he said, taking a sizeable bite from his PayDay candy bar. "I really like these things," he said referring to the mass of golden caramel and roasted peanuts. And I really like Wisconsin. Great winters and great kielbasa." "Don't forget the cheese," I reminded him. "Really? Wisconsin has cheese?!" I didn't know that!" he said with a deadpan delivery.

"I've always thought the tour could use a comedian," Karl said earnestly. "There are a lot of guys who throw their racquets, use profanity, insult fans, and, generally, act like dorks on the court. Face it, tennis is entertainment. I mean, people want to see these tantrums. It's like hockey without the stitches. Anyway, it started in high school in Madison (Wisconsin). There was this quadrangular tournament and I showed up, quite by accident, wearing tights, a silk vest, clown shoes, and a fake shark fin pinned to my back. See, I had rushed over from rehearsal for our school production of 'Romeo And

Meet  
A School Of Angry  
dolphins." "The coaches didn't  
find anything in the rule book  
about my

...ghai  
nai," he said, angrily.  
Sorry, I didn't have a  
translator. Then there  
was the PayDay Candy Bar  
Player Pay-Off in Oconomowoc,  
Wisconsin. Karl walked onto the court  
dressed in leather from head to toe. But  
rather than toting a racquet and racquet  
bag onto the court, Karl brought a  
100-watt stack of amplifiers and a beat-  
up Hagstrom guitar — a gift from the  
Swiss. His sonic version of Cream's  
"Anyone for Tennyson" was a nice touch.  
The Oconomowoc crowd went  
absolutely crazy. The Oconomowoc  
police did not, however. Despite  
being cited with several noise viola-  
tions and a reprimand about wearing  
proper tennis apparel, Karl went  
on to humiliate his opponent, Far Eastern  
national champion, She Dun Him-Rong,  
6-0, 6-0, 6-1. Karl said the leather began  
to give him a rash, which broke his  
concentration in the last set. After the  
match, Karl agreed to an interview. It was  
an extremely rare opportunity, given that

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By BOB RUBIN

# Fantasy Baseball Players Are Living a Dream

**F**ANTASY IS REALITY. This isn't just obscure Orwellian musing, either. We're talkin' baseball.

On a dreary January day in 1980, six baseball-loving friends and would-be general managers gathered at La Rotisserie Francaise, a restaurant on the east side of Manhattan. The group, which quickly expanded to 11, became the 10 founding fathers and one founding mother of a game it christened "Rotisserie League Baseball."

The idea was to unleash the mogul that lurks inside all us Walter Mittys, to validate the belief that if only given the chance, we could run a ball club better than the clowns who actually do. To scratch that itch, the Rotisseries came up with a game in which they select major leaguers at a preseason auction or draft and form teams that meet in competition based on the actual statistical performances of their players in various categories over the course of the season.

Total payrolls were fixed and could not be exceeded (which immediately put Rotisseries one huge step up on their counterparts in the real world). Thus a premium was placed on spending wisely, based on good judgment and knowledge of the players. Anyone could buy superstars for big bucks, but that reduced what you had left to pay others. What often separated contenders from pretenders was the ability to spot and purchase sleepers—say a rookie or a young player about to break through to stardom, or perhaps a veteran on the comeback trail.

You also could trade or sell players. The only thing that might bring an "owner" more joy than discovering a hidden gem was getting the best of a rival in



*Some criticize Rotisserie baseball leagues for an overemphasis on stats, but Rotisseries claim their leagues have increased overall interest in the real game.*

a trade. Competition was good-natured but fierce. Winners got cash prizes out of a pot to which all contributed before the season began, but much more important were bragging rights—and if you had nothing to brag about, you could always resurrect the old Brooklyn Dodgers slogan, "Wait till next year!" Leagues are carried over from season to season. Theoretically, a league can continue for as long as major league baseball is played.

What seemed a whimsical private joke and a harmless little way to juice up interest in the baseball season grew into a monster, a phenomenon to rival the cards/memorabilia craze but without the taint of crass commercialism. For the most part, Rotisserie and its many spin-offs, known collectively as fantasy baseball, remain fun, so much so that the idea has spread to basketball, football, and

hockey. But baseball, because of its 162-game schedule and heavy statistical orientation, attracts the most players.

No one has a handle on just how many people play nationwide, but based on the pages and pages of advertisements for leagues, statistic services, books, contests, guides, scouting reports, and computer software that appear in publications such as *Baseball Weekly*, *Baseball America*, and all the annuals that come out in the spring, the total has to be enormous. Further circumstantial evidence of fantasy baseball's popularity (we'll use the umbrella term from now on to include Rotisserie) comes by word-of-mouth. Just ask about it at your office—you'll probably be surprised to discover how many people are involved, and how ardently, even obsessively, they play.

The Rotisserie founders—a group that includes writers, editors, others in the publishing business, and one lawyer—still play together. "It's part of our lives now," says one of them, freelance writer Glen Waggoner. "Breathing, brushing your teeth, and Rotisserie League Baseball."

The founders published a book in 1984 that has gone through six subsequent editions. "It has everything from the rules of the game to player ratings to *ad hominem* comments about the game to anything that makes us smile," says Waggoner, who won the historic first Rotisserie season. At the time he was co-owner with novelist Peter Gethers, and their team was called the Getherswag Goners. Now the sole owner, Waggoner has shortened the name to Glenwag Goners.

Creative names are a fantasy baseball tradition. "We can certainly do a lot better



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# Why We Race



## MEDIA

than 'Minnesota Twins,'" Waggoner says with a sneer. Other founders and their teams include Dan Okrent and his Okrent Fenokees, Bob Sklar and his Sklar Gazers, Michael Pollet and his Pollet Burros, and Harry Stein and his Stein Brenners. (Were I an owner, my team would be the Rubin Sandwiches.)

The name "Rotisserie League Baseball" is trademarked; the founders must authorize its use. They usually do so free of charge in the interest of promoting the game. However, they also have licensing agreements with some stat services, software companies, and merchandisers that earn them money.

Rotisserie as played by the founders encompasses four offensive categories—batting average, home runs, stolen bases, and runs batted in—and four pitching categories—victories, saves, earned-run average, and the ratio of hits and walks to innings pitched. A specific number of players must be selected at each position; in original Rotisserie a total of 22 are drafted or purchased: eight pitchers, five outfielders, two second basemen, two shortstops, one first baseman, one third baseman, and finally, another first baseman or third baseman. Point totals are assigned for finishing first through last in each of the eight categories, and at the end of the season the combined total from all eight categories determines the final standings. The winner gets 50% of the pot, the second-place finisher 25%, third 15%, and fourth 10%.

This is the sketchiest of outlines, just enough to give the uninitiated a feel for the concept of the game. There are, for example, more complex rules governing the waiver and disabled lists, players who retire, and other areas of running a team. If you're interested, buy a book or find a player. Neither will be difficult to do.

There are many variations and permutations of original Rotisserie, but the founding fathers regard them as heretical. "There are always people who want to tinker with perfection," says Waggoner. "No, our motto is 'Let 1,000 flowers bloom.'" Maoist philosophy from a Rotisserian? "If Mao played our game, you know what his team's name would be?" Waggoner asks. "The Mao Tse-Tung Depressors." Hmmm. Maybe Minnesota Twins isn't so bad after all.

The editor of this magazine has been a fantasy baseball player for 10 years and confesses that he's obsessed. When he isn't coming up with brilliant story and column ideas (hey, he's my boss), Vince Aversano is wheeling and dealing in the Windy City Rotisserie League as the owner of two teams. His American League entry is the Sandbaggers; his NL team, the Unhappy Totals.

Aversano is hardcore, playing an advanced version of Rotisserie called "Ultra Rotisserie." The competition is fierce, and the rules are complex. The standard eight categories are used, but without going into detail, his leagues include such sophisticated concepts as a draft; an auction; reserve squads, with the flexibility to promote and demote players on a weekly basis; free-agent bidding; and multiyear contracts featuring limits, options, extensions, and buyouts.



**Baseball."—Rotisserie baseball co-founder Glen Waggoner**

**The founders still play together. "It's part of our lives now. Breathing, brushing your teeth, and playing Rotisserie League**

The more sophisticated and detailed the game, the more decisions each owner faces. Play continues from year to year, so personnel decisions have both short- and long-term consequences. If you've got a good shot at winning, for instance, you can go for it this year and mortgage the future by buying and trading for high-priced talent. If you're out of it, you can sacrifice the season and build for the future by trading and selling high-priced talent and accumulating draft choices and/or cash.

As is true of most leagues, the Windy City includes people from all walks of life. Two men fly into Chicago from Los Angeles for the auction. Another was politely given the boot last year for not being sufficiently committed. That will never be said of Aversano, though. He's hooked, big-time.

"It gets in your blood," he says. "You can't pick up a sports section without thinking of your team. You can't think of baseball without thinking of Rotisserie. My most cherished half-hour of the day is watching 'Baseball Tonight' to find out

who did what—Gary Miller [ESPN's host of the show] is my favorite guy on television. I can't go to bed at night without trying to find out how my players did. I flip all around to catch games and get all the updates I can.

"But I can't watch my pitchers pitch. It's too nerve-wracking. I get ticked off at every walk they give up and have to switch stations."

The trade deadline in the Windy City League is the end of July. "Trades are made all the time, and even when they're not they're constantly discussed," Aversano says. "There's as much networking among Rotisserie owners as there is among general managers in real baseball. The trade deadline is when it really heats up. That's when you decide if you're playing for this year or next. Of course, you've got to check each player's contract status first." Again, just like the real thing.

Rotisserie or Ultra Rotisserie, the kick is the same: You get to play GM. But fantasy baseball has its critics, too. Some claim that the strict reliance on stats distorts the game. There's no way to factor in intangibles such as clutch hitting or giving oneself up to move a runner over. Others argue that by making stolen bases equal to homers and RBIs, Rotisserie gives them far too much weight.

Perhaps even more damning, fantasy baseball weakens a player's allegiance to his real team. Bill Grant, a sports copy editor for *The Miami Herald*, roots for both the Orioles and his fantasy baseball team, the Post No Bills—but not at the same time. "If I have a pitcher going against the Orioles, I'll root for my pitcher," Grant says. "I still want the Orioles to win, but not at the expense of my [fantasy] team." That's why Steve Meyerhoff, the managing editor who oversees baseball coverage for *The Sporting News*, says he finds fantasy baseball "vile."

"It takes away from the game and its team appeal," Meyerhoff says. "It makes people root against their own teams. It's numbers crunching, and I don't like it." But he holds his nose and goes along. "I have to react to our readers' interests, and the fact is a significant portion of our classified advertising comes from it."

Meyerhoff has faced facts. Fantasy is reality. ■

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## Should the fans alone vote for the starters for baseball's All-Star Game?

### Yes

Absolutely. The All-Star Game was invented for the fans. That's the only reason for the game to exist. The only aspect I would change is to mandate that National League fans vote for the players in their league, and American League fans vote for their own. After all, American League fans go to American League ballparks, and they know the AL players.

If you leave it up to the managers or players entirely, there would be just as much unhappiness and just as much outcry as there is now, just like there is when they pick the Gold Glove winners. And if you want to make the All-Star Game fair, don't limit the teams to 28 players apiece. My idea is to let the fans elect the eight starters and then let the managers fill out the team—after all 28 slots are filled, take a look around and see who's missing, and if a guy who really deserves it is missing, put him on. I know there are years where other guys are more



**JON MILLER**  
is a broadcaster  
for the Baltimore  
Orioles and  
ESPN's "Sunday  
Night Baseball."

deserving than the brand-name players, but the fans should get to see the guys they want to see. I mean, what is an "All-Star"? Is it the player who

has the best first half of the season? Is it the best player over a lot of seasons? Is it the biggest star?

It's probably all of those things, but with the fans, it's more of a popularity contest—maybe you don't keep up with all of the players, but you want to see Darryl Strawberry in the All-Star Game. That's fine. I remember in 1990 Jack Armstrong of Cincinnati had a great first half of the season and started the All-Star Game, but he went 1-6 in the second half and was traded after the '91 season. Did the fans want him to start that All-Star Game? I don't think so. They would rather have seen Orel Hershisier, even if he wasn't having the best first half that season.

This year a guy like Nolan Ryan needs to be there, and he probably will be. Andre Dawson and Dave Winfield also epitomize the game, and if the fans don't vote them in, then hopefully the managers will select them. Brady Anderson of the Orioles made the team one year—he was one of those guys who come out of nowhere, and maybe fans would have rather seen a guy like Don Mattingly as a sentimental favorite. He's one of the best players of his time, and the fans deserve to see him.

I remember when Jim Sundberg was in his fifth year in the big leagues. He always was a great defensive catcher, and when all of a sudden he was hitting .300, the fans started a movement to get Sundberg in the All-Star Game. He didn't have a big national following, but I thought what the fans did—getting behind him at the grassroots level—was great.

That's what this game is all about. It gives the fans a chance to speak out and show their passion about the game. Baseball needs that. I don't see any change coming in the way the players are voted in, and I don't believe there should be any change. ■

### No

But it should remain, at least in part, in the hands of the fans. After all, it is one of the showcase games of the season, and the fans are one of the most important aspects of the game. Voting should never be taken out of the hands of the fans—but it's not fair to leave it exclusively in their hands, either.

It hasn't been fair since 1956, when Cincinnati fans stuffed the ballot box and all eight Reds regulars started the All-Star Game. That's an example of how silly it can get. Even today, fans have a tendency to vote for the name players who get a ton of press. For example, Darryl Strawberry missed most of the first half of the season last year and still nearly made the team. And Kirby Puckett could be hitting .220, and he probably would be among top five outfielders because he's so popular everywhere and such a fine human being. Is that the right reason to start in an All-Star Game? No. But that's one of the inequities.

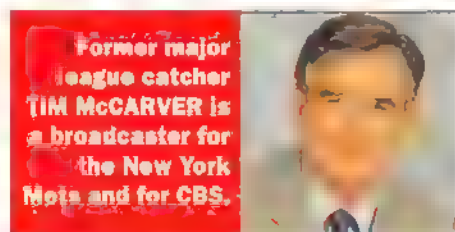
The system has been unfair since 1933, when the very first All-Star Game was played. And if fans had been voting when I was playing, I probably would

have played in more All-Star Games just based on recognizability, even though Johnny Bench was clearly the best catcher in baseball.

Today it would be ludicrous to see an All-Star Game played without Nolan Ryan. This year is the last in his Hall of Fame career, but the way things stand right now there's a chance Ryan might not make the team. Dave Winfield is another player who deserves to be there. He's another potential Hall-of-Famer, and he has mass fan appeal, but because he's a non-position player he might not make it. That's the kind of guy who deserves some consideration. George Brett is another one. These guys have given a lot to the game. To leave these players off the list is doing them—and the game—an injustice.

The voting should allow for some guys who have given a lot. So in addition to the fans' vote, the beat writers, managers, and coaches should have a say. Maybe broadcasters could be thrown in with the beat writers. At any rate, it should be divided up evenly, with each group getting one-third of the vote. That's how you get your most accurate reading, because there are no favorites played. Even the players, though they'll do it through clenched teeth, will vote fairly for one another if they believe another player is the best.

Along with that, there should be an expansion of the All-Star roster. Being stodgy and sticking to tradition for no other reason than sticking to tradition is foolish. Baseball is pretty slow to change about anything, and it also has a propensity to shoot itself in the foot—often. You wonder how many bullets it can sustain. But I believe there should be some change in the All-Star voting system, and I believe there will be. ■



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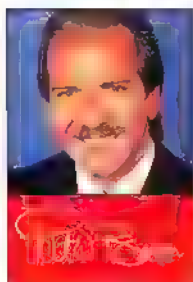
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# INSIDE PEOPLE

By PAT O'BRIEN

## An Underdog—and Ready for It



AMONG THE MANY slogans that float around in our culture, there's one that seems so simple you wonder why it's even said aloud: "Be prepared." That's it. "Be prepared." For what? you might ask. For every-

thing, the Boy Scouts would answer. So I guess when young Mike Krzyzewski first heard that motto he took it to heart, because there's not much in life or in work that he's not prepared for.

It's nearly 10 o'clock at night, and we're winding our way through Greenwich Village on our way to meet Seton Hall coach P.J. Carlesimo for dinner. It's one of those glorious New York spring evenings when everybody is out and about and happy to be there. Even Krzyzewski, who certainly is not happy to be here, is adjusting. A week before, he was eliminated from the NCAA Tournament he had owned so far in the '90s, and now we're stuck in the back of a cab in one of those glorious New York spring traffic jams. The coach makes the call, and soon we're out of the taxi and melting into the New York foot traffic. As we walk, people yell out his name and generally are puzzled to see Mike Krzyzewski strolling in the Village. Isn't this the guy who never smiles? The straight guy who coaches for the straight school?

"I get embarrassed by all that 'he exemplifies what coaching should be about,'" Krzyzewski confesses. "I curse more than I should, I make mistakes, I've made tactical errors, and they're not talked about. On the other hand, because I'm not a smiley, laughy guy on the sidelines, I don't think people realize that I really do like to laugh and have a good time and be with the boys and talk about sports. But I have to have this other image in dealing with the NCAA and coaches' issues. There has to be a more dignified image there."

Image isn't something Mike Krzyzewski actually worries about. In fact, you get the feeling there isn't much he worries about at all. There are few surprises when you're

prepared, and Krzyzewski is known as the most prepared coach in college basketball this side of John Wooden.

The Wizard of Westwood used to tell his UCLA Bruins how to put their socks on so they wouldn't get blisters; Krzyzewski doesn't allow whistles in practice because the only noise he wants his players to get used to is his voice. There will be no Chris Webber timeout stories in Krzyzewski's games. But there are always adjustments, such as going from two national championships in the '90s to being an underdog in the ACC to the defending national champs, the North Carolina Tar Heels, next season.

Time to worry? No. "It's weird," Krzyzewski says. "If you're in a great conference long enough you'll never be the top dog all the time. And to switch roles with North Carolina is good. It's exciting. It makes you work a little harder, and hopefully we'll be even a little more competitive than we have been."

It's almost summer now, and recruiting is almost completed. Camp is on the horizon—and Bobby Hurley is gone. A few weeks ago we were talking on the phone, and Mr. Image revealed an aspect of himself that, like his fun-loving side, few might suspect. "My wife was up till 5 in the morning putting together videos for the banquet," Krzyzewski recalled. "She had one on Thomas Hill and Bobby called 'Now and Forever.' I mean, I bawled. I'm telling you, I just couldn't stop crying. Mickie [his wife] said, 'Are you OK?' and I said, 'I'm fine'—lying, of course—and she said, 'You're really going to miss Bobby.' I said, 'I'm really going to miss Bobby!'"

"And when I say that, Pat, tears come to my eyes. We've just done too many things. The bond between me and a point guard,

because I was one, is special. And especially Bobby, who made me better. We made each other better because of all the good stuff we brought to the table. It's not there anymore."

Be prepared? He is. "It's tough, but it's almost better next season because I don't think of us having one point guard, but having a number of guards. One guard...I might just expect too much from that kid. I think people will undersell us because of Bobby being gone, but the fact is, we have good players and good players coming in. For us, it's a new identity without the kid who's been our identity for four years. But that's one of the neat things about coach-

ing." In other words, watch out, North Carolina.

The first time I saw Krzyzewski's name I secretly hoped he would never be a player in sports because, well, I simply couldn't imagine saying that name without error. I mean how do you get "Sha-SHEF-ski" out of "Krzyzewski"? This, to me, is the real Mike Krzyzewski story.

Krzyzewski laughs. "When I was six and I still couldn't say it right, I knew I was going to have a hard time," he says. "But, hey, my name has gotten me out of a lot of stuff. When I was

at West Point, I found out how important my name was. People would not ask me to do things because they couldn't pronounce my name.

"In classes? They couldn't call on me because they didn't want to look stupid. Or they would say, 'Mike?' Even if I didn't know the answer, you couldn't get on a guy badly you called Mike. You can get on an O'Brien: 'Well, damn it, O'Brien! Uh, Mike, what do you think?' 'Well, I don't know, sir.' See? Nobody wants to pick on a Mike." ■

PAT O'BRIEN's introspective looks at sports personalities appear monthly.



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## INSIDE INTERVIEW

By ED WERDER

# Michael Irvin: Rockin' and Rollin' with a Dallas Hurricane

**M**ICHAEL IRVIN IS AS MUCH possession receiver as playmaker. He has become the top performer in the NFL at his position, at least among players not named Jerry Rice. Because of that, in addition to all those laser spirals from Troy Aikman that he so often turns into endzone spikes, Irvin pulls down \$1.25 million from Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. The contract makes him the wealthiest player on his team and has allowed him to purchase such toys as the black convertible Mercedes he points into the parking lot at the Cowboys Cafe.

Just as with the BMW he bought with the proceeds from his first pro football contract, Irvin has insisted the windows of the Mercedes be left untinted because he wants to be recognized behind the wheel. Irvin completes a conversation on his cellular telephone while signing his autograph thus: "Michael Playmaker Irvin." He is impeccably tailored with a Rolex on his right wrist, a diamond in his left earlobe and, as usual, a lump of hundred-dollar bills in his pocket.

All of this must have been on the outer margin of possibility for Irvin, who found it necessary to call upon every iota of his competitive instinct, athletic skill, and ego to overcome the long odds of his desperate background. Now the 27-year-old star has everything he ever wanted, including his own television show and production company, a beautiful wife, a national championship season at the University of Miami, and a Super Bowl title.

The inconceivable has been accomplished, but not without tremendous struggle. Irvin was incredibly bold and the Cowboys incredibly bad when the team

made him the 11th pick in the 1988 draft. Upon selecting Irvin, former Dallas general manager Tex Schramm said, "This accelerates our return to the living." That, however, did not happen immediately. The fact is, the Cowboys were the worst team in the league during Irvin's first two seasons, a sharp and painful contrast to the Hurricanes program, where he was the chief mouthpiece for the noisiest team in the country. The difference struck Irvin particularly hard when Hall of Fame coach Tom Landry huddled his players before a game in Irvin's rookie season.

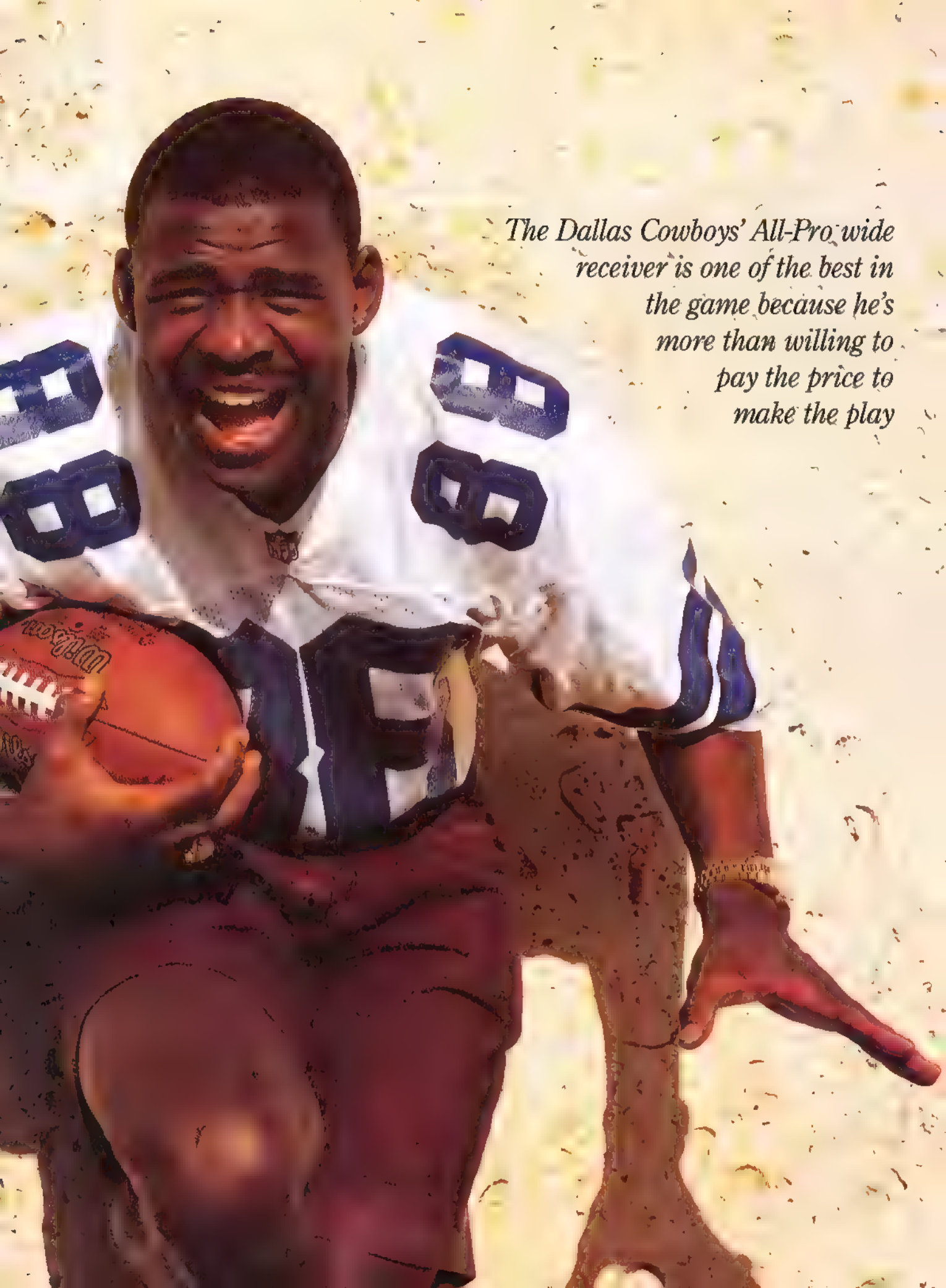
"The thing that killed me as a young kid was sitting there, hyped about playing football with the great Tom Landry," Irvin says. "I'm looking at Kenny Norton, and we're all intense because we're in the pros, and then Tom walked in and said, 'All right, fellas, let's go out there and just try to keep this thing close.' I said, 'Do what?' Goddamn. I just lost all my air. I don't believe I heard that. That was the pregame speech. Then we went out there and commenced to get our asses kicked."

But Irvin knew the Cowboys would recover when Jones purchased the team in February 1989 and hired Johnson to replace Landry. "Jimmy has one life, and that's winning football games," Irvin says. "I remember what he told the team after his divorce: 'I want you guys to know my only purpose for living now is to win football games, and if you can't help me, I don't need you.'"

The Cowboys improved from 1-15 in Johnson's first season to 7-9 in '90, then to 11-5 in '91. They finished 16-3 last season. Irvin missed most of the '89 season with a severe knee injury but since then has







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played fantastic football and become a game-breaking receiver. Not with Don Meredith and Bob Hayes, not with Roger Staubach and Drew Pearson, not with Danny White and Tony Hill did the Cowboys ever pass like they have the past two seasons with Aikman and Irvin. In '91 Irvin had 93 receptions for 1,523 yards and eight touchdowns, and in '92 he followed up with 78 catches for 1,396 yards and seven touchdowns despite the additional coverage he drew due to his reputation. Irvin had six catches for 114 yards in Super Bowl XXVII, including two touchdown in an 18-second interval in the second quarter.

When it comes to wide receivers, sometimes it takes a great one to know one. "You'll never hear me say I'm the best receiver who ever played the game," says the 49ers' Jerry Rice. "I'll give that to Michael. Michael is the playmaker, the best in the game. I mean it. He's a better receiver. I like him because he's aggressive. He can go across the middle, take a hit, bounce off, and get into the endzone."

Irvin's game rises when he faces the league's best cover men. Of his 13 100-yard games over the past two seasons, two each have come against Washington's Darrell Green and Philadelphia's Eric Allen and once apiece have come opposite Atlanta's Deion Sanders, Pittsburgh's Rod Woodson, and Cincinnati's Eric Thomas.

"In our offense, if you're a receiver, you have to be willing to trade concussions for receptions," Irvin says. "You got to do what you got to do, or you can't make it here. I'm not a real patient person. I can't sit around the house. I have to get up and go because I always feel someone is passing me up. There's somebody right this moment doing something that I should be doing that's going to make them better than me."

**INSIDE SPORTS:** Apparently you were meant for the crowds, since you were born into one—the 15th of 17 children born to your mother, Pearl. You lived in a poor section of Fort Lauderdale. What was your childhood like?

**MICHAEL IRVIN:** It was difficult because you'd see so many people with things you didn't have, but it was nice because nobody around me had anything, either. It wasn't like I had nothing and the people down the

street had it all. The only time that you really felt bad, that you felt you didn't have much, was when you went to school and saw the kids who had more. But mostly I thought my situation was the norm. Nobody had anything, so it didn't matter.

**IS:** What are your perceptions when you return home?

**MI:** I sometimes miss the old neighborhood. I go home now, and the streets are so narrow I wonder how we played football there. The roof of the house, it was like at my forehead, and I'm like, "Damn, how did

had their own beds. The Brady Bunch had it made. They had a nice yard, a boys' playhouse, a girls' playhouse, big Christmases. No, the Irvins weren't that at all. We probably violated the fire code, but the fire marshal never came over to our neighborhood. There were no Domino's deliveries.

**IS:** You pulled up in an expensive foreign sports car, a convertible with a cell phone and tiny windshield wipers on the headlights. This is in sharp contrast to the life you knew as a child. How often, for instance, did you shop for new clothes while growing up?

**MI:** Never. That never happened. We went to the second-hand store, where you get not deals, but steals. I didn't know the name-brand things like I wear now. Clothes were clothes. We never went to malls. We dealt in a world of necessities, not desires. If you had needs, they were dealt with. If it was just a want, you had to live without.

**IS:** You claim that you were satisfied with that, at least until you became acquainted with your current lifestyle. Would you really be that unaffected if you lost your career and all the material possessions you've been provided?

**MI:** I can't say it didn't bother me; obviously it did because I did something about it. I used to say I wasn't going to live like that all my life. I never ate as much as I wanted. When I was young they considered me greedy, but when you sat down in my family you ate all you could eat because you didn't know when you'd eat again.

I couldn't wait to go to school. That's one of the things as a young kid that kept me in school: those free lunches. I went to school regardless, every day. I made sure I had that lunch. You'd play the kid games where you try to get some-

one else's food. I'd lick my finger and touch some kid's food. "You want that? You want this?" They'd tell me they hated me, they'd tell me I was crazy—but they'd tell me to take it, too. I was on the free lunch program all my life and loved it. Some people were kind of ashamed. Not me. That food was good. I miss all that.

**IS:** You lived in a place of racial tension, gang activity, and drug and alcohol abuse. How different might your life have been if not for your athletic skill?

**MI:** When I went to Piper, the public high school, me and my friends used to do a lot of wrong things. We were hanging out,



we live here?" And the bed—man, the beds. I was someplace and laid down in a twin bed, and I thought, "Goddamn, I know we weren't sleeping in these." I remember if you had a twin or a double bed back then, that was booming. It was better than the floor. And I slept in a twin bed *with* people. Now I've got my king-size bed, and if my wife, Sandy, is mad, she's goes on the other side of the bed. That's in another state—I've got to call her on the phone to find out what she's mad about.

**IS:** Was the Irvin Bunch much like the Brady Bunch?

**MI:** We weren't the Brady Bunch. They all





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doing nothing. Lunch was my primary goal in school, lunch and phys ed. When I went to St. Thomas and had to sit out my junior year—

**IS:** Wait a minute. How could you suddenly afford to transfer from Piper to St. Thomas, a private high school nearer Miami than Fort Lauderdale?

**MI:** I got kicked out of the public school. You don't want to know what for.

**IS:** What for?

**MI:** I'm not telling. After I got kicked out, I decided it was time for something else. I love St. Thomas. I've set up a scholarship there in my father's name. St. Thomas stood by me during a big court fight. Piper said I could not have chosen to go to St. Thomas on my own. They said I was recruited. They said I was too damn dumb to make those decisions on my own. They wanted to know how my family could afford it. They thought I couldn't fit in, couldn't afford it. And everybody was right. It was an opportunity for me. Everybody knew I was an athlete because I was a sophomore playing varsity football and basketball. I wasn't a horrible student [at Piper]. I just didn't want to commit myself. I wasn't dumb; I just had no one around me, so I was doing what everybody else was doing, which was nothing.

**IS:** At one point, the legal representatives from the public high school offered to permit your to return and continue to play football without a suspension, but they vowed to force you to sit out a year if you transferred. Still, you switched schools, forfeiting an important year of development as a football player. What impact did that decision have on you?

**MI:** When I got to St. Thomas, I started looking at these students and listening to them talk. They all had goals and plans, and they were all working toward them. Except me. I was the only one running around waiting for the next game. But the next game for me was next year. St. Thomas was great that way. I had to spend time on the books and get ready. It was tough.

**IS:** In what way was the transition from Piper to St. Thomas difficult?

**MI:** At Piper there was constant head-butting between black and white people. There was a lot of racial tension. At St. Thomas, I hung around with a whole different group of people—still white people, but they were helpful. One of the big things I learned was that all white people were not bad. [At Piper] it was like, "No wonder I can't do nothing in school. You white people don't want to help me." They didn't have time to slow down and catch me

up. They didn't care, and if they didn't care, why should I? It was different at St. Thomas. They'd slow it down, stay late with me. Then I had goals and a different attitude to the rest of the world.

**IS:** All right, back to the original question: Did you have the potential to develop into a problem child?

**MI:** I had problems, but not with the law. You only get in trouble with them if you

aren't good at what you're doing. If you don't get caught, they can't call you a criminal.

**IS:** What kind of trouble were you most often associated with?

**MI:** I wasn't the kind to go around shooting people or anything, but I had my problems early on, which is the best time to have them. I don't know what might have happened. I'd have been getting caught by now because when you're young they just think



*"People say I'm not super fast. Hey, I can hit a good speed and come out of it a hell of a lot better than a 4.1 guy who needs five yards to break down and make a cut."*



you're a dumb black kid who doesn't know any better. But as you get older, it's "Oh, no, he should have learned by now, so we need to throw him in jail." I think about that a lot now.

**IS:** Were drugs a lure for you?

**MI:** I was never big into drugs. I was the hyper type. It was the fighting, the hanging out. There were some things I vowed to never tell, especially now.

**IS:** What were the worst jobs you performed?

**MI:** The worst damn job I had was at Burger King, and I got fired for stealing burgers. I would have to catch a bus and work for three or four hours and I was making nothing, absolutely nothing. I hated it. It required nothing. I did the fries—the thing went “beep, beep,” and I dumped them out and dropped some more, and after seven minutes it was “beep, beep.” I hated the damn job. But you were supposed to get one meal when you left: one sandwich, one fries, and one Coke. I would try to take some home to my people. I had bags of stuff. I must have had nine or 10 burgers, seven or eight fries. They caught me and fired me after one month.

**IS:** You and Lorenzo White, a neighborhood friend, had jobs ripping down wallpaper from luxury hotels on the beach, didn't you?

**MI:** Yeah. That was after we went to a football camp in Indiana because Sam Wyche was the coach there [at Indiana University]. We were juniors in high school, and he was recruiting us. We loved him. Some people paid for us to go there, so we were supposed to work at the hotels on the beach to repay them. We had to take down the wallpaper—the most tedious thing you could ever do. And there was nothing but rich people walking past. There was drinking and beautiful women and everything. Damn. They had a life.

After the first day, I told Lorenzo's mother not to come pick me up the next morning because I wasn't going. The next morning, 7 o'clock, it was “honk, honk.” Then I remember we were eating lunch one day, and I said, “Lo, we're going to live like this one day. We're going to have these rooms, looking over the beach.” I knew Lorenzo thought I would never do it. We laughed about that story at the Pro Bowl, sitting on the balcony in an expensive hotel and staring out at the water.

I remember something else about that camp in Indiana. We had all those people looking at us for scholarships, and I'm there hustling. We're playing three-card monte—it's a game with two black cards and a red card, and if you find the red card

you double your money, but if you don't you lose your money. I had kids from 8 to 18, and I took all their money because it's a cheating game. All the rich kids had money from their parents to buy pizzas, but I got to them early in the week, and they couldn't order their pizzas. Michael Irvin had their money. They came and took the money back, but of course I didn't give it all back.

**IS:** You missed all of training camp last year and then signed just before the Monday night opener against the Redskins. What was the holdout like?

**MI:** I missed football, and I'm sure that's one of the things they played on. Jimmy and Jerry know Michael loves the game. They knew I'd come in sooner or later. I don't think they imagined me sitting out the day before the game, which is what it came down to. It got to the point where it was serious.

They always have some reason to hold back some money. You can't go anywhere, because they own you. They told me there

*“Jimmy and Jerry  
knew I'd come in  
sooner or later  
[after the holdout].  
What am I going to  
tell them? ‘Screw  
you and your mil-  
lions—I'm going to  
get my job back at  
Burger King?’”*

was no way possible I'd play for anyone else, ever. Forget it. Don't think about it. Trade? Never. They'd tell me that me and the Cowboys were a match made in heaven. Jerry wouldn't even say the word “trade.” He would spell it. It was, “Play here or you don't play.” What am I going to tell them? “Screw you and your millions. I'm going to get my job back at Burger King?”

**IS:** What is your position on the NFL's new free-agency program? You were the only Cowboy protected as a transitional player, which means you'll never be a free agent in the prime of your career.

**MI:** When we weren't one of the best teams in the league, I couldn't wait for free

agency. Now that we are the best, I'm scared of free agency. We're the champs. I don't want [free agency]. Screw that. I don't want to break up the Cowboys. Emmitt [Smith] and me were talking about it. We've got to get back to the Super Bowl. We can do it if we don't lose key people and don't lose that nucleus, that togetherness.

**IS:** You make it sound as though players are forced at gunpoint to leave their teams.

**MI:** Hey, man, if you've got enough Ben Franklins staring you in the face, that's just like gunpoint.

**IS:** You've won championships with Johnson at Miami and now in Dallas. What makes him such a successful coach?

**MI:** What makes him so successful is what makes him Jimmy. He won't pull punches. He won't lie. He'll tell you that if you can come out and give him everything you've got every single day, you've got a chance. If you can't give him that, you'd better fill out your résumé so you can resume working somewhere else.

**IS:** What was it like to go from the powerful Hurricanes to the pitiful Cowboys?

**MI:** I thought it would be winning football games, making money—and I want to say girls, but I'm married now. That's what I thought it would be, and it was nothing like that. The worst part was there was nobody to show me how to be a professional. Herschel Walker was supposed to be the only big-time player, and he was doing his own thing. I came in and heard people say don't work too hard because you'll burn out in training camp. I didn't know how it worked. I listened, and I shouldn't have. The guys told me not to create waves, just make my money and go home. That was not my attitude. That bothered me. I thought it would be a lot more fun.

**IS:** The Cowboys finished 3-13 your rookie season, and you suffered a serious knee injury the next year that threatened your career. How challenging was that?

**MI:** It was rough coming off the knee thing. Damn, it was rough. That broke me. It changed me, because the first year I was young, and I thought I could do this forever, make this money forever. I had never been seriously hurt, but the knee surgery makes you realize it can end anytime. I knew then how important the game was and that I had to put everything into it because every play could be my last play.

**IS:** Jones recalls an incident in training camp the year after your injury. The Cowboys had a joint practice with the San Diego Chargers, and you were crying on the field, fighting with their players. What happened?

**MI:** We were going one-on-one, and I want-



ed to be a part of it. I wanted to play. So I was trying to go one-on-one, and Gill Byrd jammed me real good. I got frustrated because I couldn't do it. I wanted to fight everybody on their team. But I vowed then, I'd get him. I'd see him again, and when I did I would eat him up. He was the guy who covered me in the Pro Bowl when I was the MVP in '92. I had already seen everybody else. All I needed was Gill Byrd. And I went in there looking for him.

**IS:** You are one of Johnson's players, but he supposedly did not consider you the 11th-best player in the 1988 draft and in fact thought you were the third-best receiver on the Hurricanes, behind Brian Blades and Brett Perriman.

**MI:** If he did say that, it wouldn't bother me. I hear people call me an overachiever. How do you know this man is an overachiever? To say that means you know his limitations. Nobody but God can say someone is an overachiever or an underachiever, because no one else knows the limitations. No one knows my limitations.

People say I don't have a lot of athletic ability, I'm not super fast, I don't have this talent or that talent. Hey, I'm a great athlete. When you say "athlete," that's more than football. I can do anything. I can run. I can jump. I've got great timing, great talent. Those are the measurements. I can hit a good speed and stop and come out of it a hell of a lot better than a guy who's running 4.1 for the first 10 yards and then takes five yards to break down and run out of a cut. You take any great athlete and put him out there. I could play basketball with him. I could play volleyball. The only thing I can't play is golf, and that's because I don't try.

**IS:** In the Super Bowl Buffalo used an unusual coverage scheme, a two-deep zone, to protect cornerbacks Nate Odomes and James Williams. Did that surprise you?

**MI:** It was horrible. I was just looking to have a serious big game. I thought I was going to have a big, big, big day. I looked at the game plan and saw Michael on five of the first eight plays. I step out there, and it's a two-deep. We had tried all week to pump Emmitt. I told them Emmitt would be the MVP so that they'd stack the line

with eight or nine people and leave me one-on-one. They wouldn't buy it. They were there to stop the outside pass.

I was supposed to get the first play on a deep in, but I got jammed, and there was a guy down there waiting. Then I was supposed to get the third play on a corner route, and they were two-deep still. The first play they came out of it was the slant on the touchdown. I thought they'd go back to it, but after [Thurman Thomas] fumble, they were in three-deep again, and I scored another touchdown. That was basically it.

**IS:** Did you feel you could dominate Williams and Odomes?

**MI:** Not just those two. I feel if they don't do things to take me away, I can make plays on anybody.

**IS:** Other recent Super Bowl winners,

when I was out of camp without the contract and Troy was faxing me plays. To get that note every now and then and have another man say they miss you, or when Emmitt says "I love you, man"—that another man would say those things tells you about this team. Troy threw me a touchdown one game and came up telling me I was such a stud. These are grown men, and we really care about each other.

We've got a special team. The egos are incredible. We had a close team at Miami, but nothing like we have here. We understand people will be gunning for us hard next year, but after that first quarter they'll calm down, and we will commence to beating on people real bad.

**IS:** Jerry Rice is considered by many to be the best receiver ever to play. You once called him "Jesus in cleats." How would you rank yourself among NFL receivers?

**MI:** When you're talking about the whole game, my ability to think the game, to play bigger in big games, I'm top three. No doubt. There's Jerry. There's Sterling Sharpe. There's me. And Rice? Hey, I am the champion, and so by law my team and I are the best. He can count more Super Bowl rings, but what have you done for me lately? That's the world we live in. That's how everything is measured. What did you do yesterday or last week or the last hour?

Jerry's a good friend of mine and a great, great athlete. But, hey, these guys are no better than me. If I come in serious, I can beat these guys. Don't think I don't

go home saying I'm going to be the best in the league. I wouldn't sit here and say I'm scared to measure my talents with anyone's, because I'm not—anytime, anyplace. Let's play football.

**IS:** If you could choose any position, would you be a quarterback or a running back?

**MI:** No, no, no. I'd rather be a receiver. Receivers are sporty. Receivers are the ladies' men.

**IS:** Are you a trash-talker?

**MI:** Not that much. I don't do that much unless they're talking at me. Let me tell



*"Before the Super Bowl we tried to pump Emmitt so they'd stack the line against him, but they didn't buy it."*

especially the Redskins and Giants, have failed miserably after world championship success. How do you avoid that?

**MI:** The big thing we've got is nobody is really jealous of anyone. As long as we keep that, we can do what we want to do. Troy is going to get everything. Emmitt is going to get everything. Let's let them get it and not be upset. If we win enough, everybody will get what they want. We've got to make sure that happens. I swear to you that we are a close team. If I called Troy and told him I needed something, it's no problem. It's like



you this: Last year Lorenzo Lynch of the Cardinals got me started.

Lynch wouldn't be quiet. I don't know what his problem was. He started before the game, telling me I wasn't going to catch no balls. Then, the first play, we run the ball with Emmitt, and he says he's going to be right there with me all day. Everybody knows I run the deep right. He told me I wasn't going to catch one on him. I went back to the huddle, and we called the out on the next play. He goes for it, and I knew he was coming inside out, so I turned my body. He had to come over my back, then he fell off me and I was gone. As soon as I got back on the field, I went right to his ass: "Hey, big boy, where'd you go? I thought you were going to be right with me."

Then it got ugly. Teams usually double-team me, but they went one-on-one, him and me. I got him bad, hoss. I was on him bad. When they pulled him out of the game, I said, "Are you leaving? I guess you know now: Only grown-ups out here."

**IS:** Who do you consider the toughest cornerbacks?

**MI:** Deion, Eric Allen, Darrell Green. But I've played big games against them because they're big games for me. Those are the games I enjoy. That's when you take it to another level. I love playing Darrell. I love playing Deion. It kills me when I hear Darrell's going to cover me all over the field or Deion's going to cover me all over the field. I have to go to [Dallas offensive coordinator] Norv Turner and say, "Come on now. Don't cheat me. I want my balls."

**IS:** There seem to be a number of personal differences between the Eagles and Cowboys. There was Andre Waters threatening Smith before the playoff game, and Wes Hopkins swore he'd punish you for inappropriate behavior at Jerome Brown's funeral.

**MI:** That's just the Eagles. That's their way. They try to intimidate you. You just have to tell them, "Hey, wrong tree. Go try your ax on another." If you're going to cut me down,

come cut me down. Don't try to intimidate me. It doesn't work that way. Every time I play them, I swear their defense has 16 players on the field. They're everywhere, and they like to intimidate you before they get there, so they find something to talk about.

**IS:** Did the Hopkins accusations bother you because of your connection to Jerome?

**MI:** Hey, Wes doesn't know my relationship

this. We wanted everyone to be happy

I was there with Eddie Brown and a lot of UM players. We were having drinks, and we talked about Jerome and all the crazy things he did back at school. The funeral brought us together. We were having a good time, and then [Hopkins] snapped over there. He picked me out. Who better? I'm on the schedule twice a year every year. Well, let me tell you this, hoss: I'm

coming to catch the football, and I don't care who you have back there.

**IS:** What is your opinion of how the NFL restricts the marketing of its players compared to the NBA's celebrating its athletes?

**MI:** I think the NFL does that on purpose so it reaps all the benefits from marketing. The NBA makes its money from games and TV and lets the players have the marketing money. In the NFL, you can't come to a player because you have to pay NFL Properties and the NFL Players Association. They take such a big hit they can't offer the millions and millions they offer in basketball. The NFL won't let us wear the uniforms unless it has its money. It's sad. I can't say it kills me because I don't know what it's like on the other side. I think I have the personality, the intelligence, and the wit to make people want to be associated with me.

**IS:** Is your desire for endorsements the reason you take your helmet off when celebrating touchdowns?

**MI:** That's why I take the helmet off. They always tell you they can't see your face. So I rip it right off. See this? See this? This is the face. Everything I do is planned. They say we're not recog-

nized because of the helmets. Fine. Touchdown—helmet off. I only put my helmet on when I have to play football, when I have to trade that reception for a concussion. ■

*Dallas writer ED WERDER has no trouble getting his subjects to loosen up. In September he survived a one-on-one with Sam Wyche.*



with Jerome. He doesn't know the things Jerome and I said. One of the things we used to say was, "When I die, don't feel bad." From where I came from and where I am, when I die, I'm going to grab God and say, "Thank you God. I've done it all. I appreciate it, and I'm going to take my seat. I'm finished. I'm happy, and I ain't complaining one bit." We had talked about



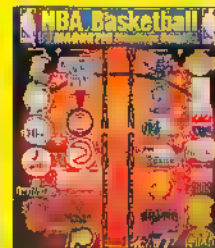
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# A Flying Start



*Want  
to get  
the jump  
on the  
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page to  
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# What's Hot & What's Not in the NFL



## Faces

*The game's as popular as ever, but the NFL needs some more stars*

**O**K, SO YOU'RE ONE OF those die-hard skeptics who aren't cheered by the idea that Troy Aikman and the suddenly fashionable star on the side of the the Dallas Cowboys' helmets are on the rise again and don't believe that it's just in time for the collective good of the NFL. Well, partner, chew on these truths:

- During Super Bowl XXVII, the league's crown jewel and the most widely viewed television broadcast in history, the commercials that generated the most interest among both the general public and Madison Avenue types spotlighted NBA players of the past and present (Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Shaquille O'Neal, Bill Russell,

Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Walton, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), cartoon characters (Bugs Bunny), or battling beer bottles (you know the ones)

- The Super Bowl halftime show in Pasadena, which featured a guy who has raised crotch-grabbing to an artistic level never dreamed of by even the most perpetually itchy pro athletes, gained as much attention as the game itself. Maybe more, outside of Big D.

- Try to name three NFL stars with national endorsement contracts. (The noted Atlanta cross-dresser, Deion Sanders, nets you only half-credit.)

The point of all this? With Super Bowl XXVII, the NFL

*Here's our look at the trends and tendencies sweeping pro football*

**A**MERICA'S TEAM IS BACK. THE BILLS may never come back. Aikman's hot; Kelly's not. Free agency is in; Plan B is out.

Speed's the rage, and power's passé; salary caps are on the way, and so are more megabucks contracts—for the superstars, that is. Marginal veterans may soon see their pay, or themselves, cut.

Say hello to the brave new world of the NFL, where change remains the only constant, where each different champion reshapes strategy throughout the league, and where the money keeps on pouring in.

Here's how things shape up, on and off the field:

### TOP 10 WAYS THE AFC CAN WIN A SUPER BOWL

10. If the Bills try to land in Atlanta for SB XXVIII, have somebody in the control tower wave them off. Airlift in another team—any team—before John Madden's chalkboard has a chance to catch up.
9. Hide Jimmy Johnson's hair spray.
8. Let the AFC use its Pro Bowl team, and ship the Bills to Aloha Stadium. Who would notice?
7. When the AFC scores—or should we say “if”?—count the conversion kick as another seven points. Just don't let Scott Norwood on the field.
6. If the Bills have to be there, give them an extra touchdown for every one of Marv Levy's good one-liners during Super Bowl week. This is certain to cut the NFC's winning score from 52-17 to, say, 52-24.
5. If the Cowboys get there again, make them play with Johnson's 1-15 team of 1989.
4. Take the NFC team to Atlanta's Cheetah III lounge the night before the game. Give the players free table dance coupons and hide their watches.
3. At halftime, when the AFC is trailing by 28 points, let it make a trade for Barry Sanders, Randall Cunningham, and Reggie White.
2. Tell the NFC the game is to be held in Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, not the Georgia Dome. When its team is 10 minutes late, assume it's given up and enforce the forfeit rule.
1. Change the rules so that each team has to use a CBS sportscaster as its quarterback. Make sure the AFC gets Terry Bradshaw. Give the NFC Verne Lundquist.—Glenn Sheeley



Can Aikman be the NFL's Joe Namath of the '90s?

proved once again that the game's the thing. The score and the uniforms are immaterial—people will watch just about anything so long as the ball has Paul Tagliabue's autograph on the side.

From a collective "Q-rating" standpoint the league is as strong as ever, a point soon to be hammered home to poor-mouthing network executives. The weakness with the NFL, however, is that even its best players have become too faceless a group. These guys are like the PGA touring pros, only with bigger cleats. The NFL doesn't suffer from an



Ross looks good in the standings—and on camera.

identity problem so much as a problem with its identities: Joe Montana has a bum elbow, Dan Marino still can't locate a running game, and John Elway has run out of miracles.

The fallout? Ratings are fine, but recognition isn't. Throw Junior Seau's mug up on a TV screen and ask 10 kids from anywhere outside of Samoa to identify him, and you'll probably get "Say who?"—this despite the fact

## THE FUTURE

*A look at the hot faces come the turn of the century:*

- Commissioner Jesse Jackson
- Six-time defending rushing champion Marshall Faulk
- Vladimir Passblocku, the 325-pound offensive left tackle recruited from a Moscow sandlot during one of the NFL's "Operation Discovery" clinics
- The ageless Jerry Rice
- Patriots general manager Will McDonough, the 1999 executive of the year
- All-pro tight end and retired NBA star Shaquille O'Neal
- Jimmy Johnson and his new buzz-cut
- Veteran quarterbacks Drew Bledsoe, Rick Mirer, and Mark Brunell
- Neil Smith
- Buffalo Bills coach Tony Dungy



Favre: Li'l Abner with a bazooka for an arm.

the Chargers linebacker is one hellacious player. Now do the same with Shaquille O'Neal. No contest, bay-bee.

The '92 season brought new coaches with indisputable sideline guile and telegenic physical features—Bill Cowher's squared chin, Bobby Ross' hunched-over profile, Mike Holmgren's towering presence, and Dennis Green's blackness (sadly, that still must be mentioned)—and this year lantern-jawed Dave Wannstedt of Chicago will be a nice addition to the mix. Last season's play also showcased club executives such as Jerry Jones, Ron Wolf, and Bobby Beathard (who reclaimed the genius label after the Chargers pulled off the NFL's greatest-ever Lazarus act). And if the Jets' free-agent spending bears fruit this year, Leon Hess may be known for more than just green tanker trucks.

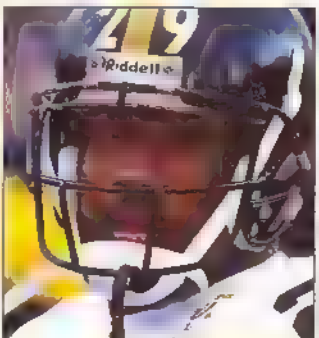
And in the Cowboys quarterback (coddled by his PR-savvy frontman, agent Leigh Stein-

berg) the NFL suddenly has the perfect marketable commodity: a good-looking player with more wholesomeness than whole wheat who plays the game's most visible position and possesses the sort of well-practiced aw-shucks veneer that renders advertisers weak in the knees. In short, Aikman's the savior for the '90s, a latter-day Joe Namath.

"You're talking about the perfect guy at the perfect time," says Steinberg, who plans to plot every step of Aikman's skyrocketing celebrity very carefully. "The name. The looks. The team. It's all so right. About the only thing we have to guard against is over-exposing Troy. We'll be very judicious with the kinds of things we get involved in, believe me."

Led by a star who can help catapult it into the 21st century, the NFL should fare much better in terms of developing more recognizable individual stars over the next few years.

**Foster leads a generation of powerful young rushers.**



## FACES

### Hot

- Troy Aikman
- Brett Favre to Sterling Sharpe
- Mike Holmgren
- Barry Foster
- Bobby Beathard and Bobby Ross
- Norv Turner
- Cortez Kennedy
- Ricky Watters
- Reggie! Reggie!
- Pete Stoyanovich
- Buddy Ryan
- Leon Hess
- Junior Seau
- League expansion guru Roger Goodell
- Audray McMillian
- Dennis Green
- Cowboys cheerleaders

### Not

- Jim Kelly
- Joe Montana to Jerry Rice
- Carl Banks
- Right-handed Jets quarterbacks
- Barry Word
- Mark Clayton and Mark Duper
- Dan Henning
- Jerry Ball
- Jeff Hostetler
- Norman Braman
- Dean Biasucci
- Vince Tobin
- The Robble family
- Seniors in the first round of the draft
- Former World League president Mike Lynn
- Erik McMillan
- Warren Moon



The league is developing some younger players with the potential for real staying power. With apologies to Reggie White, whose courtship dominated the first offseason of freedom, the NFL's youth movement bodes well for '93 and beyond.

For example, take Seattle defensive tackle Cortez Kennedy—only the third defensive MVP to play on a losing team—who epitomizes the de-evolutionary trend back to the 4-3 front. Blessed with tremendous lower-body strength, the leg drive of a bulldozer, and a great "arm-over" move, Kennedy stuffs the middle and still brings inside heat to the pass-rushing game. "When God drew up the prototype 4-3 tackle, Kennedy is what popped out of the mold," says Kansas City offensive tackle John Alt. "He's a monster."

Steelers tailback Barry Foster burst from obscurity to smash four of the single-season rushing marks Franco Harris established during his storied run in Pittsburgh. In 1993 the running game figures to build on the gains it made a year ago, and Foster is among the emerging stars of a re-emerging theme known as "smashmouth football." And even better for the NFL, he's one of 13 players who rushed for more than 1,000 yards in 1992 but still will be no older than 26 in '93.

If the move toward a more physical style of play means having a Bobby Layne throwback at quarterback, Green Bay's Brett Favre—Li'l Abner with a bazooka hanging from his right shoulder—can fill the bill. "I'm not as pretty as Troy, either physically or on the field," says Favre, when asked to compare himself to Aikman. "But, hell, we both get it done, right?"

Now the real test: to see whether either of them can get into a commercial that runs during the NBA All-Star Game.—*Len Pasquarelli*



# On-Field Trends

*In '93, if your team can't get there quickly, it won't get there at all*

**I**S IT JUST US, OR DO YOU also get the feeling that the 1993 NFL season rests entirely in the hands of the Cowboys? That any way you look at it, America's Team will determine whether the league gets a truly competitive season or a foregone conclusion in Super Bowl XXVIII? We'd like to think someone out there is capable of beating Dallas, but when we run down the names on Jimmy Johnson's roster—Aikman, Smith, Irvin, Haley, Norton—the NFL looks like the Cowboys in one trajectory and everybody else in a lower arc.

Take heart, though. The NFL has ways to make sure championships don't stay on top for very long and to ensure parity remains a driving force, which helps keep things interesting in January. This much is clear, however. The Cowboys have established themselves as the model franchise of the 1990s, and everyone else is playing catch-up. Here's why, and here's what teams are doing about it:

## Speed kills...and also wins Super Bowls

If nothing else, the Cowboys have reintroduced speed into the championship vernacular.

**In '92 the league stuffed Sanders and the run-and-shoot.**



## TOP 10 REASONS WHY THE NFL RELAXED ITS CELEBRATION RULES

10. A lot of people have been in withdrawal ever since the league put the clamps on the Ickey Shuffle.
9. When the NFL said his sideline cartwheels had to go, Chuck Noll had had enough and retired.
8. He plays for Jerry Glanville, so no one can begrudge Andre Rison a little strut in the endzone.
7. League officials were waiting for those obnoxious Smurfs in Washington to be disbanded.
6. The NFL realized sack dances just started out on the wrong foot with Mark Gastineau, when he was trying to impress his girlfriends.
5. If Jerry Jones can high-five in his suite at Texas Stadium, it should be allowed on NFL sidelines.
4. Since we're not waiting for replay decisions, *something's* got to delay the game.
3. Nate (the Kitchen) Newton's new touchdown dance for 1993: When one of his blocks results in an Emmitt Smith score, Newton will curl up in a ball and knock down everyone on the opponent's sideline like so many bowling pins.
2. The NFL waived the seven-day waiting period for those six-gun shooting sack dancers.
1. It's just another indication of how Paul Tagliabue's outrageous style is affecting the game. He's also thinking about growing a mohawk.—*G.S*

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## ON-FIELD TRENDS

### Hot

- **Speed over power**
- **4-3 defenses**
- **Pass-rushing defensive ends**
- **Quarterback controversies**
- **Career-ending injuries**
- **Artificial turf**
- **Left tackles**
- **Field goal/kickoff specialists**
- **Risk-taking offenses**
- **Tackle celebrations**
- **The Cowboys as the model franchise**
- **Any AFC team other than the Bills in Super Bowl XXVIII**
- **Stripping the ball on defense**
- **Situation substitution**
- **Emmitt Smith-type running backs**
- **Winning with youth**
- **An NFC-style approach in the AFC**

### Not

- **3-4 defenses**
- **Pass-rushing linebackers**
- **Brute strength on defense**
- **Franchise quarterbacks**
- **Safety considerations**
- **Natural grass fields**
- **Grind-it-out offenses**
- **Unemotional players**
- **Run-and-shoot offenses**
- **Steroid**
- **The Giants as the model franchise**
- **Another Super Bowl appearance by the Bills**
- **Sound tackling technique**
- **Knowing who's the nickel back, the dime back, and the pass-coverage linebacker**
- **Eric Dickerson-type running backs**
- **Winning with fading stars**
- **Quality tight ends**



Where the Giants and Redskins pounded opponents with a relentless running game and a physical defense, the Cowboys relied more on sheer speed to win Super Bowl XXVII.

"I like to call it quickness more than speed," Johnson says. "A lot of teams are fast, but we're a very quick team, too." Couple the speed and quickness of defensive stars such as Charles Haley and Ken Norton Jr. with standouts such as Emmitt Smith, Troy Aikman, and Michael Irvin on the other side of the ball, and you've got all the parts necessary for a dominant team.

Given the NFL's penchant for following the leader, look for other teams—especially in the NFC East—to add speed to their lineups to try to match up with the Cowboys. "What you try to do when you're building a team is look at your division first and see how you're going to get ahead," says Giants general manager George Young, who then went out and signed wideouts Mark Jackson and Mike Sherrard.

#### The "brain drain" to the AFC

There may be some good news for AFC loyalists. After nearly a decade of Super Bowl domination by the NFC, the pendulum may be swinging back to the AFC—if the Cowboys will allow it, of course. The AFC may need a few more years to unseat the NFC in the Super Bowl, but a recent infusion of NFC coaches and executives could pave the way to respectability. Included in the group:

- Chargers general manager Bobby Beathard, who was instrumental in helping the Redskins to two Super Bowl titles. San Diego reached the AFC divisional playoffs last season.
- Bill Parcells, the former Giants coach who won two Super Bowls, is now coaching the Patriots. While New England may not get to the big

show any time soon, other AFC teams may take a page from Parcells' manual and start thinking defense first.

- Bill Belichick, the former Giants defensive coordinator, believes solid defense and a reliable running game eventually will get his Browns into championship form.

- Buddy Ryan, the former Eagles coach and Bears defensive coordinator, brings his brash, attacking defensive style to Houston, as the Oilers try to overcome their underachiever tag.

- Paul Hackett, a 49ers assistant under Bill Walsh, is now implementing his mentor's high-tech offense in Kansas City.

- And Ron Erhardt, the former Giants offensive coordinator, proved last year in Pittsburgh how valuable a solid running game can be.

With all that brainpower switching conferences, the

AFC just might win a Super Bowl again. But just in case you were wondering about how dominant the NFC has been, consider this: Before the NFC began its current nine-game Super Bowl winning streak, the AFC held a commanding 12-6 edge in Super Bowls. Now it's 15-12 for the NFC.

#### Where are all the great quarterbacks?

This season the NFL celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the Class of '83, the wondrous draft that included such stars as John Elway of the Broncos, the Dolphins' Dan Marino, and Jim Kelly of the Bills. However, chances appear remote that a similarly talent-laden quarterback class will appear any time soon. Other than Aikman, another true franchise quarterback may not emerge for years.

Stanford coach Bill Walsh, who won three Super Bowls in the '80s with the 49ers, has a theory about the dearth of top-

**The Bills and the Bowl: Let someone else have a shot at it.**



flight NFL quarterbacks. "They don't seem to emphasize the position as much in college," he says. Hopefully Walsh and others can help change that. Otherwise, pro football fans could be in for a long run of quarterback mediocrity.

#### And what about the great tacklers?

Blame Lawrence Taylor for the shoddy tackling you've seen in recent years. No, there's nothing wrong with Taylor's tackling. In fact, he's among the greatest tacklers of all time. It's the way everybody else has tried to imitate LT that apparently has led to increasingly poor technique.

Taylor's ability not only to tackle his opponent but to simultaneously force a turnover has inspired imitation throughout an entire generation of play-

ers. There's only one problem: Only Derrick Thomas can do it as well as Taylor, and if they can't force the turnover they usually end up either missing a tackle or getting scorched for a big play in the secondary.

"The technique has gotten a lot worse," says former Chiefs coach Hank Stram. "You don't see sound tackling anymore."

#### The 4-3, if you please

The 3-4 alignment was the high-tech defense of the '80s: Employ three down linemen and use one outside linebacker to blitz, another to cover the tight end, and the two in the middle to stop the run. The 3-4 once was viewed as the ideal defense—but no longer.

Look around at the great defenses of the 1990s, and you'll see the 4-3. The Cowboys use it. The Redskins use it. The



The 4-3 lets Kennedy put running backs on their backs.

## TOP 10 CRAZY THINGS NFL FANS ARE INTO

10. In Minnesota they're sewing actual Vikings horns to their scalps. For guys with male pattern baldness, it's a decent gimmick: the Horn Club for Men.
9. In Dallas they're following tradition by painting one side of their faces blue and the other side silver. Stars on the tongue and eyelids are new features.
8. In New England fans are getting ready for new coach Bill Parcells. Hats are being made from tuna cans—dolphin-safe, of course.
7. In Atlanta the Glanville look is hot: black shirts, black cowboy hats, black boots, silver belt buckles, and sunglasses. And those are just the officials.
6. In Pittsburgh the Steelers' resurgence has been matched by that of sportscaster Myron Cope's "Terrible Towel." If you could make them out of steel wool, maybe the Pittsburgh economy would turn around, too.
5. In Tampa Bay, where the fans are following Sam Wyche's every move, Wicky-Wacky hats, like the Buccaneers, promise not to be offensive.
4. In San Diego fans might be seen holding their hands behind their heads, à la coach Bobby Ross—a refreshing switch from the playoffs, when they had to hold their hands over their eyes.
3. In New Orleans they're considering a return of the "Aints" bags. Unlike the old days, this new reference is to "ain't won a playoff game."
2. In Miami fans like to walk around Joe Robbie Stadium with funny fish on their heads. As disappointing as last season was—the Dolphins just missed the Super Bowl—Don Shula's head will remain intact.
1. In the Raiders' neighborhood in Los Angeles, unlike cities where fans hold up painted fingers or signs, they hold up liquor stores.—G.S.

Eagles use it, and so do the Vikings. The Bears, of course, have used it for years, though they no longer possess the overwhelming talent they had in the mid-'80s.

The 3-4 isn't dead, but it has seen better days. It's fallen out of favor primarily because fewer pass-rushing outside linebackers are coming out of college, compared with a surplus of bigger, stronger defensive linemen à la the Seahawks' Cortez Kennedy, the Colts' Steve Emtman, and the Cowboys' Russell Maryland. Teams simply have adjusted to the talent being fed from the colleges, and at this point the personnel dictates a four-man line more often than not.

#### Run-and-shoot on thin ice

Times are tough for the gadget offenses that were in vogue just a few seasons ago. Run-

and-shoot teams such as the Falcons, Lions, and Oilers were the rage in 1991, as were the no-huddle Bills; all four teams made the playoffs, and the Bills went to the Super Bowl.

But last year the Lions and Falcons were shut out of the playoffs, the Oilers lost to the Bills in an AFC wild-card game, and Buffalo was squashed by the Cowboys in the Super Bowl. "I think defenses are adjusting to that type of offense," says Cleveland coach Bill Belichick.

It took a few years, though. Belichick remembers playing the Lions in 1988, when he was the Giants defensive coordinator. "We were in our base defense for almost that whole game," he says. The Giants won, but Belichick soon added extra defensive backs to his game plan to account for the



four-wide receiver sets.

What's it all mean? It means the run-and-shoot may soon join the wing-T on the NFL's playbook scrap heap.

#### Will injuries continue to get worse?

Two years ago Lions offensive lineman Mike Utley was paralyzed in a game against the Rams. Last year Jets defensive end Dennis Byrd suffered partial paralysis in a game against the Chiefs. Is a trend emerging? NFL officials insist that these are two isolated and unrelated cases of serious

**Ask Kelly if defenders are bigger and faster than ever.**



injury, but others fear the situation will get worse in coming seasons.

"It can't help but get worse," says Marc Buoniconiti. The son of former Dolphins linebacker Nick Buoniconiti, Marc is a former linebacker who remains paralyzed from a football accident he sustained in college. "Players are bigger, faster, and stronger," he says. "The potential for serious injury is very high."

Unfortunately for the 1,600 or so players in the NFL, that's the risk they take every time they step onto the field. Let's just hope they all can leave the field—and their careers—under their own power.

#### Get out your lineup cards QUICKIE QUIZ:

1. Name the nickel back on your favorite team.
2. Name the third tight end brought in on short-yardage situations.
3. Name the linebacker who specializes in pass coverage.
4. Name the linebacker who specializes in stopping the run.
5. Name your third-down back.

Give up? Don't worry—you're not alone. These days every-

one's having a hard time recognizing who's playing which downs.

Saints general manager Jim Finks was so concerned by all this situation substitution that he proposed reducing rosters in an effort to force teams to give fewer players more responsibilities. "It's gotten to the point where it's hard to keep track of who's playing," Finks says. But the NFL owners turned Finks down, which means figuring out who's playing where and who's playing when is going to remain difficult.

And you thought you didn't

have to be a rocket scientist to understand football.

#### To replay or not to replay?

And finally, the good news for NFL purists. Instant replay remains on the shelf for a second consecutive season. In fact, the controversial officiating tool barely was mentioned at the owners meetings in March, so the zebras won't have Big Brother looking over their shoulders for another year.

Now the NFL can only hope things go as smoothly as they did last year, when there weren't many plays to argue about.—Bob Glauber

## Coaching

*Nowadays, even a winning record is no guarantee of longevity*

**G**IBBS IS OUT, AND SO'S Ditka. Parcells is back again, and Reeves never left (sort of). Wannstedt and Phillips are in; Handley's out, and so is MacPherson. And just about everyone else is holding on for dear life.

Like it or not, that's NFL coaching in the 1990s, where the term "job security" is some kind of cruel joke, burnout is a constant threat, and scorecards are a virtual necessity to keep track of all the changes. How many changes? Try 19 over the last three seasons, which translates into a staggering 68% turnover rate among the league's 28 teams.

"It's really amazing," says Don Shula, the league leader in terms of continuous service. He has been the Dolphins coach since 1970. "When you look around and see what's happening, it's pretty scary."

Easily the most stunning move of the

year was Joe Gibbs' resignation in March. One of only three coaches to win three Super Bowls, Gibbs apparently was suffering from a migraine condition brought on in part by his 20-hour workdays. Here's what Gibbs' departure means to the NFC East: The Cowboys'

**Miami monument: Shula's 23-year reign may be the last of its kind.**



JOHN SHERIDAN

### THE FUTURE

**A look at on-field developments between now and the turn of the century:**

- An AFC Super Bowl victory by the year 2000—maybe
- The run-and-shoot disappearing from the NFL within three years
- Bill Parcells taking the Patriots to the playoffs within three years
- Four Super Bowl wins for the Cowboys before Jimmy Johnson retires
- Situation substitution continuing
- A gradual scoring increase over the next five years
- Unprecedented popularity for the H-back as quality tight ends grow more scarce
- Emmitt Smith forced into premature retirement because he'll have had too many carries over the first several years of his career
- Troy Aikman in the homestretch of a Hall of Fame career
- The draft remaining the essential building tool for NFL franchises
- Teams featuring younger players as older, higher-priced veterans become economic liabilities



JOHN SHERIDAN



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## COACHING

### Hot

- **Decreased job security**
- **Young coaches**
- **Burnout**
- **Players' coaches**
- **Parcells the savior**
- **Walsh and Robinson: back to college**
- **Defensive coordinators running the whole show**
- **Mussing Jimmy Johnson's hair**
- **Easier practices**
- **Figuring out the secret to Johnson's 'do**
- **Tom Landry commercials**
- **David Shula, the next generation**
- **Don Shula, the survivor**
- **Owners telling the coaches who's boss**

### Not

- **Mike Ditka's sideline rantings (and commercials)**
- **Ray Handley bashing**
- **Gatorade showers**
- **Head coaches doubling as coordinators**
- **Long-term contracts**
- **Jerry Glanville's antics**
- **Retread coaches**
- **Jim Mora's put-'em-to-sleep offense**
- **Head coach headphones**
- **Marv Levy at the Super Bowl**
- **Jack Pardee's lack of discipline**
- **Coaches telling the owners who's boss**
- **Dick MacPherson's sideline kisses**



Jimmy Johnson, who joined the team way back in 1989, is now the senior coach in the division in terms of continuous service. "Hey, I've only got four more spots to go before I'm the senior coach in the whole league," Johnson says, referring to his place among coaches with continuous service with their current teams.

Incredibly, he's right. It's Shula, followed by Saints coach Jim Mora (who started in 1986), the Lions' Wayne Fontes (who started after 11 games in 1988), and Johnson. Falling by the wayside after last season were Gibbs; Bears coach Mike Ditka, who was fired after 11 seasons; and Dan Reeves, who was given his walking papers after 12 seasons in Denver.

But the news isn't all grim. Reeves hooked up with the Giants after general manager George Young was turned down by Tom Coughlin and Dave Wannstedt. And former Giants coach Bill Parcells decided he'd had enough of the NBC broadcast booth and signed on with the struggling Patriots.

Longtime defensive assistants Richie Petitbon of the Redskins and Wade Phillips of the Broncos once thought they'd never get a head

coaching job, but the revolving door brought good fortune to both.

Gibbs' retirement finally gave Petitbon his first shot at age 56, and Phillips took over in Denver.

In 1992 coaching turnover offered up a refreshing new look, as three first-year coaches—Bobby Ross of the Chargers, the Vikings' Dennis Green, and Bill Cowher of the Steelers—led their respective teams to division titles in 1992. Cowher was the youngest of the bunch, winning the AFC Central at the tender age of 36. (A little perspective on Chuck Noll's successor: Cowher was only 12 years old when Noll



**Reeves and the Broncos couldn't see eye to eye, so he ♥ NY.**

began his career with the Steelers in 1969.) Throw in Mike Holmgren, who had the Packers in playoff contention until the final week of the regular season, and you've got a solid nucleus of coaches as the NFL enters the 21st century.

Well, maybe and maybe not. Such positive results are no guarantee of longevity. Just ask Reeves and Ditka, two of the winningest coaches of all time. Or Gibbs, who discovered winning took a heavy toll on his health and personal life.

Coaches on the bubble this year include Joe Bugel of the Cardinals, the Jets' Bruce Coslet, and Rich Kotite of the Eagles. All three received contract extensions after last season—but only for a year. Jack Pardee of the Oilers has his problems, too, and so do Jerry Glanville of the Falcons and the Raiders' Art Shell.

About the only thing that's certain in this line of work is turnover, lots of turnover. Look for more in 1993.—B.C.

**Cowher: One of three first-year coaches who won division titles.**

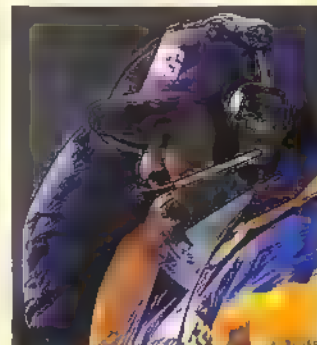


## THE FUTURE

**A look ahead at NFL coaching trends at the turn of the century:**

- **A third-generation Shula as head coach**
- **A worsening of the burnout problem**
- **A swing of the pendulum back to older coaches**
- **Even shorter tenure on the job**
- **More coaches going back to the college ranks**
- **Psychological counseling for dealing with media pressure**
- **Temporary retirements, à la Parcells**
- **Fewer coaches in the broadcast booth (the networks finally will realize they don't say much)**
- **Players in open rebellion to get their coach fired**
- **Weakened coaching discipline**
- **Strategy so complicated only a select few can understand it**

**Green won respect with his record, not his race.**





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## OUTSIDE THE LINES

### Hot

- Judge David Doty
- "The Boys Are Back in Town"
- "...to the ear, off the collar, short on top"
- Designer boxer shorts
- Garth Brooks
- Front-loaded contracts
- Community service/charitable endeavors
- Streamlined chain of command in the front office
- Married, with children, pets, a Suburban in the driveway
- Ralph Cindrich
- Multilevel marketing in the locker room
- Working the neck
- Sportcoats (even ties sometimes)
- Gold money clips
- Nachos, hold the peppers
- Chapel meetings

### Not

- Indentured servitude for players
- "Hail to the Redskins"
- Deion's 'do-rag
- The bad-ass/bare-ass look
- Hammer
- Deferred payments
- "That's 10 bucks for autographed cards and pictures, 15 for footballs"
- Decision by committee
- Trying to break Wilt Chamberlain's libido records
- Ralph Wilson
- Offseason internships
- Bench-presses
- Belt buckles that resemble pilfered hub caps
- Gold dental prosthetics
- Hot dogs swimming in ~~sausage~~
- Religion worn on the sleeve



# Outside the Lines

*Today's players are well-groomed, PR-conscious—and rich*

**S**OME KUDOS AND KUDON'TS from a place far from the madding crowd:

Nearly 30 years after Green Bay players boycotted a practice over the club's reluctance to supply clean sweat socks and athletic supporters, and 18 years after their successors marched with picket signs that read, NO FREEDOM, NO FOOTBALL, nearly 300 league veterans gained their freedom this spring—thanks in large part to Minneapolis federal judge David Doty. The game's Great Emancipator (and a hell of a mediator, too), Doty left many players unshackled, unbeholden, unfettered, unlikely to return to their teams in 1993, and in a lot of cases, unbelievably rich. Hey, anyone who can make unknown guard Brian Habib the highest-paid offensive lineman of all time, even if

for only a couple of weeks, deserves to take a bow or two.

So, too, do the perceptive folks who quickly realized how to use the league's new system to their advantage. Because of the pending salary cap, which will widen the disparity between the game's haves and have-nots and eventually dissolve the middle-class sector of the NFL's caste system, general managers and agents began doing business exactly the opposite of the way they've been accustomed to. This spring front-loaded contracts, which pay out more than half of a deal's dollars in the first year and then gradually decelerate salaries in subsequent seasons, became all the rage.

And no one raged better than Pittsburgh-based agent Ralph Cindrich. A nuts-and-bolts negotiator with a well-

practiced feel for hardball tactics, Cindrich's name sometimes gets lost among those of Steinberg, Demoff, Woolf, Condon, and Zucker, but in the first month of free agency Cindrich moved three clients for more than \$18 million and figured to close out the signing period with more than \$30 million in business. Figure in Cindrich's commission, and you'll see there's no need to plan any charity telethons for him.

And speaking of agents, how about Hammer's new venture? Make that Mr. Hammer, sports entrepreneur. Apparently booted from the Atlanta Falcons sidelines by edict of commissioner Paul Tagliabue, ol' Stanley Burrell (that's Hammer's real handle) decided that if you can't beat the system, join it. The former Oakland A's batboy is now an agent badboy, chumming up with Eugene Parker, the mouthpiece for buddy Deion Sanders, and even landing a few clients of his own in the April draft. Don't hurt 'em, Hammer, at the bargaining table, OK? And one piece of advice: Be legit enough to compromise once in a while.

However, it was an oldie but goodie, "The Boys Are Back in Town," that topped the league's

**His deal with the Packers brought White some large green.**



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Brooks blew away the Gloved One's touching moments.

hit parade last season and promises to be the most requested anthem again in '93. The Cowboys scored so often in Super Bowl XXVII that the Busboys should be able to retire from the royalties earned by having their hit blasted over and over and over again in the Rose Bowl.

The crooner who benefited most from a live Super Bowl appearance—well, *he* was live, even if his words were on tape—was country superstar Garth Brooks, whose homey rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" outclassed the Gloved One's halftime gyrations and further emphasized the league's fixation on old-fashioned family values. Giving back to the community and pitching in with local charities both were high on players'

checklists in '92 and figure to remain so this season; natural disasters and heretofore unnatural largesse made a renewed sense of social commitment a

Broncos owner Bowlen: A hands-on man at the helm.



## THE FUTURE

A look ahead at trends outside the lines come the turn of the century:

- Virtual reality training camps, where quarterbacks can throw harmless interceptions
- The Tokyo Samurais, defending NFC Far East champions
- Realignment...at last
- Pay-per-view in every home
- The Pepsi-Cola/Pizza Hut Super Bowl XXXIV
- Locker room tofu bars
- Negotiations aimed at renewing the labor accord of 1993
- Retractable-dome stadiums
- Conference championship games at neutral sites

high-agenda item for some franchises. For example, Miami Dolphins players were so moved by the havoc wreaked by Hurricane Andrew that they returned week after week to decimated areas such as Homestead, Fla. Kansas City Chiefs players delivered food to the needy; many of the Atlanta Falcons quietly spent most of their Tuesday off-days visiting children's hospitals. Reggie White, the free-agent pool's most prized commodity, talked as much about his inner-city ministry during his offseason tour of the NFL as he did cold, hard cash. Quoth White, an ordained Baptist minister: "Lending a helping hand like this looks good, and it feels even better."

In their personal grooming habits, selection of vehicles, and choice of lifestyles, NFL players seem to be heeding White's look-good/feel-good credo. Headbands and 'do-rags are passé, replaced by neat grooming. While no one's naive enough to believe players aren't still skipping curfew on the road for late-night ren-

dezvous, the all-American family, complete with a station wagon in the driveway, is making a strong comeback. And even some of the players with California beach-bum backgrounds have taken to wearing underwear. (White briefs, however, are still the stuff of nerds.)

The injuries to Mike Utley and Dennis Byrd have placed more emphasis on neck work in the weight room, where flexibility—not pure bulk—is now the goal. God-squadders, praise Allah, have moved their prayer meetings off the 50-yard line and into the locker room. The only problem is finding a meeting room where some multi-level marketing plan isn't being discussed; powder-mix vitamin supplements and diet-control concoctions are particularly popular.

Finally, the downsizing of front offices will continue as teams mimic Dallas' no-middle-men theory of management. Watch for owners such as Denver's Patrick Bowlen to take a more active interest in the football operation.—L.P.

## Money

*Free agency and an uncertain TV contract have clouded the picture*

**A**S A GROUP OF NFL owners, general managers, and prominent player agents milled about in the lobby of a luxurious resort in Palm Desert, Calif., last March, Sam Huff stood by shaking his head in wonderment. The scene was the annual league meetings, and the talk was money—a whole lot of money, so much money that Huff, a former star linebacker, could hardly believe the numbers. Five million here. Ten million there. "Incredible," Huff said.

At one time, Huff thought he made a lot of money playing the game he loved. That was in 1969, the final year of his brilliant 13-year career, when he signed a contract with the Redskins that paid him \$38,000. Twenty-four years later, Huff is staggered by the multimillion-dollar deals being tossed around in the first year of NFL free agency.

"Every one of these guys who signs a contract now must be saying, 'Timing is everything,'" Huff says. "But I have no regrets about when I played.

I wouldn't trade my experience in pro football for the highest salary that any linebacker makes today." However, Huff admits it might have been nice to cash in on the financial bonanza enjoyed by today's players, especially the 1992-93 free agents who scored big.

Evidently, money is no object in the NFL these days. The sky's the limit on player contracts and league rev-



**Tagliabue might not match the \$3.6 billion deal of '89.**

enues. Or is it? Will the league continue this upward spiral into the next century, or will the NFL find itself struggling with money issues, just as major league baseball has in recent years?

"I think it's still too early to draw any conclusions," says agent Ralph Cindrich. "You have to see how things play themselves out."

Owners are banking on their new collective bargaining agreement with the players, into which they successfully negotiated a salary cap, to be the mechanism for controlling costs. Salaries now will reflect the overall financial health of the NFL: If times are good, as they are now, salaries will be high. But if revenues drop—as they almost surely will when the league negotiates a new television deal later this year—salaries may level off, too.

Either way, most league officials and players seem content with the new arrangement. "We're partners with the

NFL now," says NFL Players Association executive director Gene Upshaw. However, not everyone is comfortable with the salary cap, which negates an advantage held by the league's traditionally high-paying teams.

"Every time I sit down and look at the numbers, I just don't know how I'm going to do it," says the Raiders managing general partner, Al Davis, who fears the salary cap could drive out high-priced veteran players and hurt fans in the process. "I think the tradition, the nostalgia, may be a thing of the past. No longer will you be allowed to keep veteran players around a year longer and pay them excellent money."

Davis' fears could materialize if the league fails to see a significant increase in revenues, particularly television money. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and Browns owner Art Modell negotiated an unprecedented four-year, \$3.6 billion TV contract in 1989, but now they must deal with a broadcast industry ravaged by the recession. Some owners fear per-team revenues from



**Dallas owner Jerry Jones can afford to grin: His investment has paid off.**

television could drop from \$39 million in 1993 to \$29 million in 1994.

Nevertheless, that sobering possibility isn't scaring off new investors, who see the NFL as a superb business venture capable of achieving sustained growth over the long term. The league will expand by two teams beginning in 1995, with St. Louis, Baltimore, Memphis, Jacksonville, and Charlotte as the finalists. The asking price likely will be in the \$150 million range.

That may sound like a lot now, but just ask Huff. In a few years, it'll look like a bargain.—B.G.

## THE FUTURE

**A look ahead at NFL money trends at the turn of the century:**

- Reinstatement of the World League throughout Europe
- Football as the fastest growing international sport
- Players complaining that the salary cap limits salaries
- Owners contending the salary cap is necessary to achieve growth and stability
- Corporate ownership
- Expansion to 32 teams by the year 2000
- Players threatening to strike after the current agreement expires in 1999
- A rookie suing the NFL over salary restraints
- Paul Tagliabue in his third term as commissioner—if he wants it
- \$10 million-a-year quarterbacks

## MONEY

### Hot

- Multimillion-dollar free-agent contracts
- \$5 million-a-year quarterbacks
- Salary cap considerations
- Expansion
- Television revenues
- Skybox revenues
- Front-loaded contracts
- Increased health and pension benefits
- Elimination of "middle-class" players
- Owners willing to spend big bucks
- Rookie wage limits
- Overseas highlight shows to market the NFL

### ■ NFL Properties

### Not

- The World League
- Penny-pinching owners
- Millionaire rookies
- High-priced players over age 30
- Plan B
- Incentive clauses
- Veterans' complaints about rookies making too much money
- Immediate adoption of a pay-per-view system
- A CFL-NFL merger
- Free agency lawsuits
- Top offensive linemen complaining that they're underpaid
- Immediate threat of a players strike
- Quarterbacks who make less than \$1 million



# Hot

- **Terry Bradshaw**
- **Seated side for the Super Bowl**
- **ESPN's live press conferences**
- **Gary Myers on HBO**
- **The openness of the Dallas Cowboys' draft day "war room"**
- **Football on Christmas night**
- **Insightful, analytical game stories in print**
- **Statistical graphics packages**
- **Chris Mortensen**
- **Todd Christensen**
- **Crisp, concise journalism**
- **HBO's "Inside the NFL"**
- **Super Bowl halftime**
- **Hannah Storm's page-boy cut**

# Not

- **Greg Gumbel**
- **Sports bulletins**
- **Nick Buoniconti**
- **Live shots of a 30-pound turkey basting in the Maddenmobile**
- **Play-by-play writing that simply repeats what everyone's already seen**
- **Instant replay**
- **Fred Edelstein in a \$1,500 designer suit**
- **Paul Maguire**
- **Verbose reporting ("ESPN has learned that...")**
- **NBC's incessant whining about not having enough major-market teams (If you don't want the games, get out, fellas)**
- **Three-hour Super Bowl pregame shows**
- **Draft "expert" Mel Kiper's inflatable 'do**



# Media

*Oddly enough, the coming thing seems to be solid journalism*

**F**ORGET THE TELEstrator. Banish it to whatever nether region the NFL uses to store all the VCRs it was forced to junk when instant replay finally went kaput for good in 1992. With newspaper-background hackers such as Will McDonough, Gary Myers, Chris Mortensen, and John Czarnecki now charged with ferreting out whatever germs of truth are found in studio-show news reports, the telephone—yeah, heavens to Candice Bergen—has become the electronic age's magic instrument of choice.

Sure, TV cameras can take you to where the action is, but it takes a veteran newshound with the ability to bang hard on the phone (and a co-dependent relationship with Ma Bell and her various offspring) to

tell the cameras where to go and NFL officials where to get off. And that kind of background is found primarily in wily, hardened newspaper guys who know how to chase a story and then, more importantly, how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Somehow that art eluded Fred Edelstein, but Myers,

**McDonough's accuracy lifts the insiders' credibility.**



## TOP 10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NFL FREE AGENCY

10. Reggie White was worth all that money.
9. Tim McDonald was worth it, too. Maybe if the former Cardinals safety had gone on a world tour similar to White's, he'd have been noticed a little more.
8. Say goodbye to the Eagles as you now know them. White's gone, and future free agents Seth Joyner and Clyde Simmons will be out of there next year.
7. Say hello to incessant griping among veterans who have yet to cash in on the free agency bonanza.
6. Player movement via free agency will slow down once a salary cap is in place, probably by next year.
5. The NFL now can count on year-round publicity, thanks to its winter/spring version of baseball's "Hot Stove League." Free agency has been the talk of the offseason.
4. Free-agent quarterback Jim McMahon is now in Minnesota, where the Vikings hope he stays in one piece for more than two or three weeks.
3. Free agency brought out general managers' true feelings about offensive linemen. They can't live without them, and they'll pay a fortune to prove it.
2. Contrary to doomsayers' fears about free agency, this is not the end of the NFL as we know it.
1. Free agency has added new meaning to the phrase, "He's not worth the money they're paying him." Except, of course, for Reggie White.—B.G.

McDonough, Mortensen, and Czarnecki make up a formidable and competitive quartet. It's not by mistake or coincidence that this foursome has lifted the "insiders" type of reporting to new heights of accuracy. They've all got speed dial options and Rolodexes chock-full of key phone numbers.

You don't believe it? Try calling Mortensen at his Bristol, Conn., hotel on a Saturday night or Sunday morning during the season. Or see if you can reach McDonough, the dean of the insiders, at his desk on any Friday afternoon during the NFL campaign. Sorry, folks—the phones in the sports department of *The Boston Globe* don't have call waiting, and neither does Willy's home phone line. Good luck.

"The medium doesn't matter. Picking up the phone, hitting those contacts—it's still the most basic thing you do," says Mortensen, a celebrated reporter for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *The National* sports daily before jumping full-time to ESPN. "I think what we've all got in common, besides a mutual respect, is the knowledge of how you work a story. Knowing the [three] other guys are all newspaper veterans, that usually starts the same way: You work on the theory that one more phone call will never hurt."

Czarnecki, a football junkie whose Everyman mug doesn't appear on-camera during broadcasts of CBS's "The NFL

**He's wild, but Bradshaw has proved he's no dummy.**



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## TOP 10 STORIES IN THE YEAR 2000

*Just in time for the 21st century, the NFL finally entered the 20th century this year by affording its players the kind of free agency already woven into the fabric of American sport by baseball and basketball. Of course, eight years ago, who could have predicted that Reggie White ever would be available to the highest bidder, and would be using God as an adviser? With that in mind, here's a look into the crystal ball and a peek at what awaits the league in the year 2000:*

10. Entering his 12th NFL season, 32-year-old Barry Sanders is poised to break Walter Payton's all-time rushing record. His closest competitor, Emmitt Smith, was, of course, forced into retirement after the '99 season when Dallas owner Jerry Jones once again failed to find him a competent backup.
9. Led by his revolutionary new scheme featuring 11 defensive linemen, coach Buddy Ryan and the Houston Oilers are favored to win their eighth straight AFC crown and end the NFC's 16-year Super Bowl winning streak.
8. The EZ-Trend 2000, IBM's most popular coaching laptop, is standard equipment on every NFL sideline. Fans, who now call 50% of the offensive plays, can tap into the computer's database for assistance in making their selections.
7. NFL commissioner Jesse Jackson announces at the Hall of Fame game between London and Mexico City

that his five-year plan for creating front-office opportunities for minorities finally has succeeded.

6. Three games into the campaign, Phoenix owner Bill Bidwill publicly lambastes ESPN's Fred Edelstein for reporting that coach Joe Bugel is likely to be fired by midseason.
5. Neck and spine injuries are virtually wiped out by the helmet air bag, a device that self-inflates upon contact, then rolls itself back up before the 20-second clock between snaps expires.
4. Drew Bledsoe's nine TD passes, five of them to the aging Jerry Rice, lead the 49ers past New England, the quarterback's former team. Patriots players continue to moan about the preseason trade that sent Bledsoe to the West Coast, but most agree the deal was necessary to refinance Parcels Stadium.
3. Calls flood NFL headquarters when a satellite transmission error somehow replaces the final minutes of the hard-fought Kansas City-Denver bloodletting with the traditional folk tale "Ishtar." Pay-per-view customers demand a refund.
2. The Rams' 25-year veteran tackle, Jackie Slater, decides his dual bionic knees finally are unable to carry him and announces his retirement.
1. In an upset, seventh-year pro Marshall Faulk actually breaks Payton's rushing record before Sanders does. Sighs the Lions star, "If they'd only bought me a couple of guards who could block." —L.P.

Today," spends his weekends doing nothing but chasing down tips. Instead of the make-up room, he's usually in a Manhattan hotel room on Friday night, weary from the cross-country flight from L.A. but still ready to dial a callus onto his index finger. Says Czarnecki, who turned to television when *The National* went under: "A hundred or so calls? That's probably not out of the question. You network, swap information, whatever. It's quid

pro quo over the phone."

The equation, though, is a lot of calls for precious few on-air words. While all four print journalists have struggled at times to come to grips with TV's need for quick impact, the relentless pressure for economical reporting hasn't dulled their enthusiasm for getting the whole story. The principles learned in Journalism 101 still apply—even if the words simply flow into the ether instead of off a printing press.



Kremer is destined for more than sideline reporting.

"The hardest thing for me to get used to with TV was working with this 'just the headline, please' mentality," says Myers, a contributing writer for *INSIDE SPORTS* who covers the NFL for the *New York Daily News* and serves as the resident insider

for HBO's "Inside the NFL" weekly show. "In two minutes, with maybe four items at most, you don't get time to develop a story. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't have things totally developed before you step out there." —L.P. ■

## THE FUTURE

*A look ahead to media trends come the turn of the century:*

- Jerry Glanville, ace color analyst for the league's newest cable carrier, the Nashville Network
- USA Sunday
- Interactive scoreboards, where the media can grade every play-call
- A universal open-practice policy mandated by the league
- ESPN "GameDay" host Andrea Kremer
- On-time quote sheets at the Super Bowl
- The one-minute ticker
- Ted Turner's 24-hour NFL superstation
- Miked quarterbacks
- The new and improved Helmetcam

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# The Game Is *No* Gimme

Pro scouts know that college stars—even the rim-rattling Calbert Cheaney—have to adapt to make it in the NBA

By TOM KERTES

**T**HE NBA SCOUT WATCHES THE NCAA Tournament game, his brow furrowed furiously. What's with the surliness when, with this wall-to-wall basketball going on, this should be a time for joy for any self-respecting hoops junkie? "Sure, but this isn't basketball," he says, eyes firing darts as yet another team goes into a zone defense. "You want to show me basketball? Play by the rules!"

College players, of course, play by the rules (well, on the floor anyway), but as far NBA people are concerned, they're the wrong rules. "The pro game is created for the highest entertainment value," says NBA scout Walt Szczerbiak. "The college game, on the other hand, is designed to give everybody a chance, to keep the weaker team in the game as long as possible." It's downright socialism, devastating for the soul.

Still, it's true. The college clock runs for a leisurely 45 seconds, while the NBA allows a scant 24 ticks per possession. In college you run a system; in the pros you do your own thing. Colleges allow a variety of traps and zones; the pros don't. Different rules make for different games, and different games often require the players to have different characteristics and skills in order to succeed—which makes pro scouts' lives a living hell.

"They should play by the same rules," growls Szczerbiak. "That would be a dream. This? This is a nightmare."

Well, let's not get overly emotional. Basketball is, you know, still basketball, in the ultimate sense, isn't it? Really, we can't hold with those pro scouts who literally refuse to watch college contests all year and base their entire judgment on the post-season All-Star games (which are, of course, played by NBA rules). That's taking things a bit too far.

On the other hand, the scouts' agony is understandable. The differences are in the details, the little things, and these guys are paid to be obsessed with details. They don't merely check whether a player can shoot, dribble, or pass. No, they write reports on whether a guy can dribble more than twice to his left. In the middle of a sunny afternoon. While guarded closely by a player eating a doughnut. Hey, call it paralysis by overanalysis, but that's the nature of the job.

And there's no doubt about it: The varied natures of the college and pro games do indeed place a slightly different emphasis on different skills. In the NBA game things happen quicker, so a scout has to look for players who can recognize, read, and resolve situations at a high speed. A potential pro must be lightning-quick off the dribble, because half the time the clock is running out. And individual athleticism must be of the highest order. "There's less and less room in the league for the one-dimensional, standing jump shooter," says Portland Trail Blazers senior scouting consultant Bucky Buckwalter. Yup, these days in the NBA you rarely get picks to open you up for a jumper. If you don't know how to create on your own, well, you can just forget about it.

**G**iven the schizophrenic nature of the issue—the two games are the same, yet different—there's simply no simple answer to the question: "Does college coaching have an impact on a pro career?"

On one hand, yes, it does make a difference where you go to school. Although it's rarely a deciding factor, make no mistake: The scouts will look at it. Heck, if you spend four years with almost anyone, much less Bob Knight, it will have an impact on your personality and career.

But if only it was as simple as that. For instance, take Knight himself—please. The Indiana deity, of course, had Calbert Cheaney, most likely the top senior in this year's draft, playing on his side. The top player, playing on a top team, for perhaps the premier college coach in the land? Paradise from a pro point of view, no?

As a matter of fact, no. Knight's players, with the single significant exception of Isiah Thomas, rarely reach their full potential in the pros—and even Isiah admits privately that Bobby's daily bashings wore on him. Some scouts blame Knight's system, a rigidly controlled motion offense that rarely allows you to go off the dribble. It's highly successful, but also vastly different from the offenses NBA teams tend to run. Others, off the record, point to Bob's less-than-knightly personality. "He pushes you and squeezes you and pushes you and squeezes you until there's nothing left," says one GM. "Unless you're a kid with incredible mental strength, you may not want to even look at a basketball after four years with this guy." This theory certainly

**The once and future point? At times, Hardaway has shown a Magic touch.**



## Top 27 NBA Prospects

*This isn't a projected draft order, but our selections as this year's best potential pros. (Projected pro position: PG = point guard; SG = shooting guard; SF = small forward; PF = power forward; C = center. \*Possible early entry.)*

**1 Shawn Bradley, 7'7", C, Brigham Young.** Bradley surprised a lot of people when he entered the draft after a two-year hiatus from college ball, but he appears to be the right man in the right place at the right time—i.e. a decent big man in a center-poor class. Many pro scouts think he'll be much more than the next Rik Smits, too. "He's a great athlete—he can pass and shoot from the outside," says Bullets head scout Bill Gardiner. "His only problem is weight and strength. Unless a team has a dominant center it has to take him with the first pick. And how many teams that have a great center are in the lottery?"

**2 Glenn Robinson\*, 6'8", SF, Purdue.** How feeble is this year's senior class? After just one season of college hoops, there was

tremendous pressure—about \$35 million worth—on this Purdue sophomore to enter the draft. "He doesn't have the understanding of the game yet," says Portland director of personnel Bucky Buckwalter, "but then again, how could he? What he does have is tremendous all-around skills."

**3 Jamal Mashburn, 6'8", SF, Kentucky.** Mash owns all of Robinson's overwhelming skills, but his body lacks championship flexibility. He has tremendous range—out to NBA three-point distance—and his extra-quick release reminds insiders of Bernard King. Still, some think Mashburn lacks heart and was made to look better than he really is by Rick Pitino's unmatched system. "Well, I don't know about that, but Rick could make anybody look good," says St. John's assistant coach Ron Rutledge. "He even got Billy Donovan into the NBA, a pretty amazing feat."

**4 Anfernee Hardaway, 6'7", PG/SG, Memphis State.** Spectacular but immature, this is a flawed gem, an erratic genius. He's exceptionally creative, and he softened his jumper beautifully last season. "The way I look at it, he should be the No. 1 point





Earl the rejecter vs. the multit talented Rogers.

seems to apply to Keith Smart and Dean Garrett, stars on Knight's 1987 championship team as juniors who looked practically deceased in their senior year.

On the other hand, perhaps Knight's players just aren't that talented. Perhaps they're made to look better than they really are by a highly disciplined system aimed at maximizing their strengths. "He rarely recruits outside of the state," says Indiana

Pacers vice president of basketball operations George Irvine. "A lot of those kids are not much more than pure standing jump shooters with smarts, players who simply can't be adapted to the pro style." A case in point: Steve Alford, anointed as a superstar by the media, but a player with nary a pro skill to speak of.

However, despite these factors and a fairly consistent history of pro mediocrity, Indiana players tend to be drafted higher than they should be because of the Hoosiers' history of success and the respect Knight engenders. Of course, that only makes their subsequent fall from grace all the more dramatic.

Fortunately for Cheaney, he seems to be immune to history, an exception to the general rule. (Not that that hasn't been said about other Indiana stars in other years.) He's got great touch and range on his jumper, appears strong mentally and physically, and if you listen to Big Ten players, is even murder

off the dribble. "The man is tough," says Iowa guard Val Barnes, nodding his head sagely. "The man is the *man*."

**N**ow that Cheaney's manliness is settled, it's time to settle the main question: Which colleges produce the best pros? Or to put it another way, if your son was a high school star with alleged NBA potential, where would you

send him to college in order to maximize his chances for success?

As you may have guessed, there's no simple answer to this question. But, equally obviously, there are a few general ground rules we can settle on:

① "Go to a school that runs a pro-like system," says Ed Tapscott, Knicks director of administration and former coach at American University. Your adjustment to the higher level of play will be less dramatic, thus less traumatic.

② Go where the defense is mainly man-to-man. "And where it's a pro-type man-to-man," Pacers GM Donnie Walsh adds, "not some of this half-assed stuff some schools call man defense."

③ Go where the offensive system stresses the recognition-and-read factor.

④ Go where the coach runs a system—but where that system is not overly systematized. According to Milwaukee Bucks assistant coach Frank Hamblen, "A healthy balance between discipline and the freedom to create within that disciplined offense is ideal."

⑤ Go where the coach is a human being—at least half the time—but where he'll still give you some direction toward growing into a responsible citizen. Nasty troublemakers who run roughshod over everyone are not preferred NBA types.

⑥ Go where the team features stars, especially senior stars. You'll be noticed easier by those who make decisions about your NBA career.

⑦ And, especially, go where there's a lot of individual instruction going on. "You'd be surprised how little they'll develop your skills at some schools," says St. John's coach Brian Mahoney. "Coaches are so concentrated on teaching their system, and there's so little time for practice, that there's hardly any time left for the kids to improve their individuals skills. Even

guard taken," Gardiner says. "He can also play two-guard, but as a point guard he'll make other people better players."

**5 Chris Webber\*, 6'9", PF, Michigan.** Awesome skills, but they haven't gotten any more awesome this year. "He's gained some bad weight, slowed down a bit," one GM says. "Chris got carried away with all that attitude instead of paying attention to his game. Yet he's still a kid with unreal potential."

**6 Calbert Cheaney, 6'6", SG, Indiana.** Yes, Virginia, there will be some seniors picked in this draft after all. Scouts love Cheaney's shot—"the sweetest in all of college basketball," according to Rutledge—and are agog over the mental and physical strength he's exhibited in his four years at Indiana. The problem? He exhibited them at Indiana, not exactly a hotbed for hot pros.

**7 Rodney Rogers, 6'7", PF/SF, Wake Forest.** A "3½" in the best sense of the term, with the quickness of a small forward and the oomph of a top power guy. Scouts see him as a LaPhonso Ellis type, but with an even more multifaceted game than the deliciously versatile Nuggets rookie.

**8 Vin Baker, 6'11", SF, Hartford.** He's either Scottie Pippen plus three inches, or Danny Manning with a better personality. Either way, insiders are just in love with the idea of this quick, long-armed seven-footer defending real-size small forwards. "An outstanding all-around prospect who can rebound and dribble 94 feet or make the great outlet equally well," says Buckwalter.

**9 J.R. Rider, 6'5", SG/SF, UNLV.** This guy is "quick-strong," a la Larry Johnson—and in the pros it won't matter one bit who wrote those term papers. "An explosive scorer," Gardiner says. "He's the best shooting guard prospect in the draft."

**10 Terry Dehere, 6'4", SG, Seton Hall.** Streaky as hell, but an absolutely unstoppable offensive machine when he's on. Decision-making, strength, and defensive attitude remain questionable. "He's inconsistent," Gardiner says. "I don't think he's a pro shooter. He won't score like [he did in college] in the pros."

**11 Bobby Hurley, 6'0", PG, Duke.** It's astonishing how many insiders still don't think Hurley—too small, too slight, too white—can play in the pros. "I'm a great fan, but even I'm not sure



though I see my main responsibility as winning, not growing pros, I really feel the better you get individually the better it is for the team. So we emphasize individual instruction each day."

According to the consensus of insiders we've talked to, these schools fulfill these requirements the best:

**1. North Carolina.** Dean Smith is a system coach, all right, "but it's a system that places a high degree of emphasis on NBA-style recognition, reading of defenses, and making the proper choices on the floor at high speed," Walsh says. The Tar Heels defense is man-to-man, but that style also is mixed liberally with a soft, three-quarter-type press that's exceedingly un-NBA-like. "Defensively, there's about a year of adjustment for a typical North Carolina player," Buckwalter says. "But they're smart. They adapt and learn real well."

Some scouts, perhaps having seen too many Geoff Cromptons and Joe Wolfs slowly slug their way around the floor, disagree with the choice. "Perhaps the expectations on these guys are unfair," says Buckwalter. "Everyone just assumes any kid Dean gets is the most talented around. That's not necessarily so." For example, when J.R. Reid entered college, Derrick Coleman also was a freshman playing the same position, but he wasn't nearly as highly rated. Still, it soon became obvious that Coleman was by far the superior player, and that the high school talent evaluators had made a grievous mistake. "But that's not Dean's fault," Irvine says.

**2. Kansas.** Kansas? Roy Williams has put one player into the first round, and a very marginal one at that (Mark Randall). Yet many scouts consider his pro preparation superior even to Smith's. "Well, he's



**In the scouts' eyes, Lynch gets hung up by a lack of small-forward skills.**

### The most overrated players in the draft

**Josh Grant, 6'9", SF/PF, Utah.** Considered a sure lottery selection just a year back, Grant can play this game at a wide variety of tempos: slow, slower, and slowest. Yes, he's an intelligent player who maximizes whatever he's got—it's just that whatever he's got ain't nearly enough.

**Scott Burrell, 6'6", SG/SF, Connecticut.** Huge things have been expected from this beyond-brilliant pure athlete—but few have been realized this year. Still a probable first-round choice, Burrell simply has never learned how to play the game. A potential pro baseball career further clouds his future.

**George Lynch, 6'7", SF, North Carolina.** Will be a first-round pick (the North Carolina factor), but this solid, competitive fundamentalist lacks NBA-caliber small forward skills.

**Bryan Sallier, 6'8", PF, Oklahoma.** Some scouts love his body, but with 30 extra pounds, there's too much of that body to go around these days. A hard worker in the post but without the fundamental skills. "He doesn't play above the rim or make the right decisions very often," says St. John's assistant coach Ron Rutledge.

**Luther Wright, 7'2", C, Seton Hall.** In terms of his development, it was a big mistake for Wright to come out early. But some club likely will make it worth his while financially. "He never showed that much in college," Washington Bullets head scout Bill Gardiner says. "But somebody will take a shot with him. The thing with Wright is you're looking down the road two years, and even then you're gambling."

only been there a couple of years," says Buckwalter, smiling. "And he doesn't get nearly the same level of talent Dean does."

Williams could have two first-rounders this year in guards Rex Walters and Adonis Jordan. And in our opinion the very fundamentally sound Walters, though still not that highly regarded by most scouts, has a chance for greatness.

**3. Duke.** An Indiana-type system, but one that encourages creative individual forays. "The perfect balance between offensive freedom and healthy discipline," says Knicks president Dave Checketts. "Those kids are smart, eager to learn, and willing to be part of a whole." But what about the \$37 million waste, Danny Ferry? "No position, no footspeed," Walsh replies. "Hey, even Coach K can't give you footspeed."

**4. Michigan.** Steve Fisher, like his predecessor Bill Frieder, is one of the best recruiters around, but under both men the Wolverines program has been one in which overwhelming talent overshadows the

how he'll stand up to the physical aspect of the NBA day-to-day," Rutledge says. To us, however, he's the ultimate brainy point guard, just a notch below John Stockton.

**12 Allan Houston, 6'6", SG, Tennessee.** This is the cutoff point, there isn't a single guaranteed big-timer in this shallow group once you go beyond the top 11. Houston has all the skills—he's an excellent shooter, in particular—but his mental and physical toughness are questioned seriously by those in the know.

**13 Aclé Earl, 6'10", C, Iowa.** "I don't like his game one bit," one scout says. "I see no mobility, little athleticism, and this guy only blocks shots if you come right at him." Still, Earl is the all-time leading rejecter in the Big Ten, and thanks to coach Tom Davis, he has a pretty solid idea of what goes on out there.

**14 Ervin Johnson, 6'11", C, New Orleans.** A 25-year-old self-made player who is athletic and large but still has some bad habits. Namely, he constantly keeps his hands low and brings the ball to a level where he can be picked clean by little guys. He also "doesn't establish position very well in the post," says Buckwalter.

"He's not a particularly inviting target." Nevertheless, Miami coach Leonard Hamilton says "you've got to respect Ervin because he's worked so hard to get to this point."

**15 Jalen Rose\*, 6'8", PG/SG/SF, Michigan.** A great athlete with tremendous skills but an equal amount of arrogance. "He's got negative versatility," a GM says. "He could play all those positions—or more likely, not one of them well enough."

**16 Chris Mills, 6'6", SF, Arizona.** A mystery guy who lacks quickness and explosion yet tends to get the job done. "He's been a great leader for us," says Arizona coach Lute Olson, "but I'd like to see a lot more toughness."

**17 Rex Walters, 6'4", SG, Kansas.** Sarunas Marciulionis minus the muscles, Walters is very underrated. Aggressive off the dribble, he's also an outstanding long-range shooter who understands the little things about the game very well.

**18 James Robinson\*, 6'2", SG, Alabama.** A one-on-one genius who's not particularly interested in his teammates. Or defense.



absence of discipline and fundamental skills. "You want the raw material out of that program," Buckwalter says, "but then a coach like Larry Brown will tell you Gary Grant and Loy Vaught just about drive him nuts with their lack of basics."

**5. Syracuse.** Similar to the Michigan situation, but at a slightly lower talent level. "Not as many great players, perhaps, but these guys may develop more as pros," Walsh says. "Rony Seikaly and Coleman have both overachieved, in my opinion. So has Sherman Douglas, at least until he went nuts with his contract situation in Miami."

Comments on some of the other top schools: Iowa's 94-foot game teaches its otherwise no-chance big guys—Brad Lohaus, Les Jepsen—how to move up and down the floor NBA-style, but that style

**Van Exel knows exactly where he's going—and he'll tell you all about it.**



**Charles Outlaw, 6'8", PF, Houston.** According to the Portland Trail Blazers' Bucky Buckwalter, "If he could shoot just a teeny bit he'd be the No. 1 pick in the country." Well, Outlaw can't shoot a lick, but the kid is an unbelievable hustler, defender, and rebounder. He reminds insiders of ex-Lamar powerman Adrian Caldwell, who lasted for two years in the pros on just those skills.

**Spencer Dunkley, 6'10", C, Delaware.** With that name, how can he miss? This British ex-soccer player had huge numbers against Vin Baker each time they faced off. "He's rawer than raw but owns big time desire and agility," says NBA scout and big man expert Walt Szcerbiak. "Dunkley will play in the league."

**DeLon Turner, 6'5", SF, Florida A&M.** A Barkleyfied genius who can do pretty much anything he wants to do on the floor, be it inside or on the perimeter. However, he must get more interested in the off-the-ball aspects of the game.

**Lindsey Hunter, 6'1", PG, Jackson State.** "A big time, too-small player who reminds me of Joe Dumars," says Manhattan coach Fran Fraschilla. But does he play Dumars-type defense? "No way," Fraschilla says. "But then again, neither did Joe at McNeese State."

**Lucious Harris, 6'5", SG, Long Beach State.** This guy has a lot of athleticism and exceptional scoring ability. However, he'll have to make the transition from college forward to pro guard. "That's a tough change," Walsh says. "You can't go far in this league as a guard unless you're a top ball-handler."

often means Hawkeyes are less than outstanding man-to-man defenders. Most observers give high marks to Cincinnati coach Bob Huggins, who hasn't sent a single player to the pros. "He will this year," says Buckwalter. "Bobby is great. He plays mostly pressure, but when they pick you up man-to-man, it's gum-to-gum. And those kids are tough. I'd love to have them." Thanks to Rick Pitino, Kentucky players get lots of individual instruction and are in great shape. However, Pitino's all-pressure defense doesn't conform to conventional NBA ideas.

John Mahoney has preserved a lot of Lou Carnesecca's tenets at St. John's; pro scouts praise Mahoney's "excellent man-to-man pressure and pro-type offense" and laud his concentration on such fundamentals as defensive footwork and boxing out on the boards. And UCLA's traditional high-post offense, designed by John Wooden and largely continued by every

Bruins coach from Gene Bartow to Jim Harrick, gets high marks for developing the ball-handling, passing, and jump-shooting skills of big men.

What about the small schools, the ones that once in a while give you a Dennis Rodman, a Scottie Pippen, a Charles Oakley? "Sometimes being the big fish in a small pond is the best thing for a player's growth," says Buckwalter, who likes to pick sleepers whenever possible. "In a place like that, if you have the great ability you'll be featured. You'll be the go-to guy. Your skills have a chance to fully develop, and you'll get used to the pressure of taking big shots. Because, let me tell you, when you play for the kind of money we pay these days, every shot is a big shot." ■

*In completing the research necessary for this draft piece, senior writer TOM KERTES spent more time around courts than the cast of "Law and Order."*

**19 Douglas Edwards, 6'9", SF, Florida State.** Some see him as a lesser Mashburn, a forward who does everything well though nothing great; others love his skills and blame the Seminoles guards, who rarely gave him the seed. "He needs to be in an unselfish system to succeed," Hamilton says.

**20 Malcolm Mackey, 6'11", PF, Georgia Tech.** A consistent double-double performer who at times still seems to lack desire. And he always seems to lack a perimeter game.

**21 Ed Stokes, 7'0", C, Arizona.** A soft seven footer with skills who's been held back by his middle-class background. "Yeah," Buckwalter says, "a bit of street toughness wouldn't hurt."

**22 Nick Van Exel, 6'1", PG/SG, Cincinnati.** A defensive dream and an opponent's nightmare, this is an arrogant aggressor who likes to trash-talk you into submission on the floor. "He reminds me of Tiny Archibald," one GM says, "except Tiny penetrated and created for others. Van mostly does it for himself."

**23 Sam Cassell, 6'3", SG, Florida State.** Likely the greatest one-on-one force in the country—but Cassell also is a too-

small shooting guard with nary a point skill. And don't forget his tendency to get in his coach's face. And his teammates' faces. And everybody's face, except his opponents'

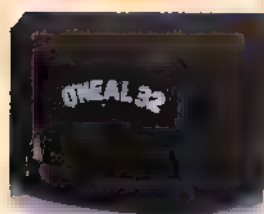
**24 Thomas Hill, 6'5", SG, Duke.** An absolute zero in high school, Hill came a long way indeed on hard work, native talent, and Blue Devil-ish smarts. However, this in-your-shirt defender must show more of a shot for the pros.

**25 Eric Riley, 7'0", C, Michigan.** He wasn't even a starter for the Wolverines, but he has enough size and skills to at least be a capable NBA backup.

**26 Conrad McRae, 6'10", PF, Syracuse.** An explosive shot-blocker with great leaping ability but no outside game to speak of. "He'll break your face in a New York minute," Hamilton says. "He's got that pro toughness, all right."

**27 Geert Hammink, 7'0", C, LSU.** The only thing he has in common with Shaquille O'Neal is the alma mater, but considering his size someone will take a chance that he can be the league's next Dunking Dutchman.

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**So Long...**



# Good Riddance

*The roads Nolan Ryan and Carlton Fisk are traveling to the Hall of Fame couldn't be more different*

By PAUL LADEWSKI

**W**ANT TO KNOW AN ASTOUNDING FACT ABOUT Nolan Ryan and Carlton Fisk, baseball's golden oldies? At season's start, they had combined to play 3,268 games—the equivalent of more than a year without a Gatorade break—in 46 years and 155 days of major league service. Want to know an even more astounding fact? These two ageless warriors, who have spent more than two decades sharing the national stage, barely know each other.

"I know Carlton just from playing against him," Ryan says. "He's a real competitor, very professional. I respect the way he plays the game and conducts himself. He has to work hard to be able to continue to play his position."

Says Fisk of Ryan: "I know what kind of a man he is. I know what kind of commitment he has made. That's why I admire him, and that's why he's been as good as he is for as long as he's been there. He's done it the old-fashioned way—no shortcuts."

One can only imagine what would have happened had the two hooked up in their careers. Only Fred Savage has stayed younger for a longer period of time, and he hasn't had nearly as many wonder years. "There's not a whole lot of 'em in the over-40 club anymore," Ryan says.

And so they fade into the sunset, two well-acquainted strangers bound for Cooperstown, one in a blaze of glory, the other in a field of manure.

**N**olan Ryan confronts a most formidable challenge in this mother of all farewell tours. Ryan's legendary fastball has been known to turn grown men into so many jelly-kneed cowards, but now he stands face to face with an opponent he cannot turn back: a runny-nosed kid who doesn't stand much taller than a shin guard and holds a shiny white baseball in his extended right hand.

"Can you sign this please, Mr. Ryan?" the boy asks.

"Sure," Ryan draws obligingly.

Behind the youth, approximately 150 more Ryan worshippers—men and women, girls and boys, in all shapes and sizes—carry items that range from I-was-there certificates from one of his seven no-hitters to caps to posters to gum cards to baseballs. They know Ryan is at the end of the trail, and this is their last chance to get a slice of Americana before one of the most remarkable pitchers in major league history rides off into the sunset. "This line has been like this for a couple years now," Ryan says between John Hancock. "It's just gotten bigger this year, that's all."

Perhaps no one is more familiar with the madness than Zack Minasian. The visiting clubhouse manager at the Rangers' Port Charlotte, Fla., spring training base, Minasian served as Ryan's batterymate during the autograph fests by keeping the fans in line and placing the items in the correct hands. At an average of 350







## *"I don't worry about getting my just due."*

are known to all, but perhaps the most overlooked fact is that Ryan has proved old-fashioned principles still can work in the '90s. To hear him tell it, his top priority is to be a good parent to his two sons and one daughter and provide positive direction for young people. Still, hasn't there been a time when Ryan would have liked to shed his smiley face, tell the memorabilia vultures where to stick their Sharpies, and take his ball and glove back to his cattle ranches in Texas? "Well, you know, there are a lot of days when you'd rather not deal with it and be left to yourself," he admits, "but that's part of being in the public eye."

*Next.*

Minasian recalls a day in spring training, when the most-watched sign in Port Charlotte said, NOLAN RYAN WILL NOT SIGN TODAY. The sign was the third one of its kind used

that spring. "The first two were stolen," Minasian says, "so we finally decided to use a homemade job." However, when Ryan noticed the number of fans who showed up anyway, his mind did an abrupt U-turn. The premier power pitcher in baseball history may have been able to claim 5,668 strike-out victims prior to this season, but he sure is a sucker for a happy face these days.

"You have to work at it like anything else," he says. "As I've stressed to my children, just because things aren't going the way you want them to doesn't entitle you to take it out on somebody else. So I try to live by that."

*Thank you, Nolan.*

*You're welcome.*

"That's part of pitching, and that's something I've talked about to our younger players. You can't let circumstances dictate what happens on the mound. You have to stay within yourself, pitch your game, and not be distracted."

*Thank you.*

*Uh-huh. You're welcome.*

"You don't know what influence you have on people, or whether you have any influence on them at all. Sometimes it's a subtle thing. Sometimes people come up to you and say, 'Hey, I've observed the way you've approached circumstances, and it helped me.' If that's the case, then you feel good about it. My attitude is that if I'm in a position to influence kids or people, then let it be a positive influence."

*Can I shake your hand?*

*OK.*

Twenty-seven years and more than 300 wins later, is there anyone who doesn't respect Ryan, the man about whom never is heard a discouraging word? In the most trying of times—such as last season, when he posted a 5-9 record, the lowest win total in his career for a full season, or even this spring, when a knee injury sent him to the disabled list—nobody was heard to say that Ryan should give it up.

He has never won the Cy Young Award as the best pitcher in a given season, he boasts as many career home runs as post-season victories (two), and he entered the '93 season a mere 32 games over .500 (albeit with mostly ordinary teams). Yet he remains the most popular landmark in Texas this side of the Alamo, as evidenced by the 53,657 fans who attended his last outing at the Astrodome—for an exhibition game, no less—last April. "He's a giant in our sport and in our industry," says Rangers managing general partner George W. Bush. The club thinks so highly of Ryan it signed him to a 10-year personal services contract, which will go into effect upon his retirement.

"I don't worry about whether I've got my just due," Ryan says with a shrug. "You know, I think it's silly to worry about those things. Just do your job, tend to your business, and don't worry about how people perceive you. You have to do what you think is right in your heart, because that's what you have to deal with."

*I'm sorry, sir, that's two items. Only one per person, please.*

"I feel I can work with anybody as long as things are reasonable. I don't get into personalities. We have a job to do, so let's make the most of it and do the best job we possibly can."

*Where do you want it autographed? Right here?*

*In blue. Thank you, Nolan.*

*You're welcome. Next.*

*How y'all doin'?*

"I think being a role model is something that is important. Some people may resent being in that position, but that's my view."

*Can I take a picture of you with my son? His name is Ryan. We named him after you.*

*All right.*

*Look at the camera, Ryan.*

*Click.*

Now there must be 111,336 awe-struck baseball fans named either "Nolan" or "Ryan."

autographs per day for three or four days a week, he estimates Ryan signed 10,000 items this spring, even before Opening Day—and not just for the fans. One day Boston's Andre Dawson walked into the clubhouse with a portrait to be signed. Another time Jeff Schaefer, who was trying to stick with Cleveland, asked Ryan to put his signature on a Stetson. What's next, a jockstrap? A resin bag? "It bothers me when people say the players owe them something," Minasian says, "but in Nolan's case, he actually feels that way. I mean, the guy is incredible."

*Whose chair is this? Can you get it out of the way, please?*

*Thank you very much.*

"I just try to accommodate as many people as I can," Ryan says. "It's part of the business. These fans support baseball, promote baseball. I'm a believer in two-way streets. I always try to treat people the way I would like to be treated. I think the demands will drop off some after I retire. The more you're out of the day-to-day media attention, the less popular you are."

*Thank you. Good luck, Nolan.*

*You're welcome.*

"Whatever they have is important to 'em, and they're not familiar with what's going on in your life, so they don't understand a lot of times what we're dealing with here."

*Only one item, ma'am.*

*Thanks, Nolan.*

His wondrous deeds and glitzy records

DAVID SUTHER

**C**arlton Fisk strikes a Garboesque pose as he nibbles on pregame clubhouse cuisine in front of his locker. Bo Jackson walks by. "Hey, Pudge, are you in the lineup tonight?"

"Naw," Fisk answers. "I can't play this game. Everybody here knows that."

The fact is, Fisk has played the game as well as any one of the whippersnappers, as well as Ryan himself, and he has done so longer than most. As recently as two years ago, at the ripe young age of 43, "Pudge" was rated the No. 1 catcher in the big leagues, according to the formula used to classify free agents; he needs to catch only 25 games this season to set the all-time major league record for appearances behind the plate. Have two Hall-of-Famers ever had more similar careers and yet left the game on more disparate terms than these two grand old men of baseball?

At 45 and 46, respectively, Fisk and Ryan have spit in the face of logic to become two of the most remarkable medical studies in sports history. Each began the current season as the owner of a significant record: Ryan as the all-time strikeout leader, Fisk as the pacesetter in home runs for a catcher. However, Ryan is leaving on a magic carpet, while Fisk plays out the string not as Happy Happy Joy Joy, but as a backup forever at odds with club management.

"It's an absolute joke," says Jack McDowell, who has matured into a 20-game winner while pitching to Fisk. "This



**The Rangers dedicated 25 pages of their media guide to Ryan, while the Sox...**

should be a fun year for him. At his age, he doesn't have to prove anything."

For much of the 13 years he's spent in Chicago, seven of which have involved a contract dispute of one kind or another, Fisk has had to do precisely that for arch-enemy Jerry Reinsdorf, the shrewd businessman who serves as White Sox board chairman. Few can argue that as a bottom-liner Reinsdorf has been a colossal success. In the last two seasons the White Sox have realized a \$35 million profit despite second- and third-place finishes in their division. However, many observers note that Reinsdorf-operated teams have an odor unlike that of most other clubs, and truth be told, the stench that has surrounded him and Fisk lies somewhere between a dead skunk and Oscar the Grouch's armpits. "The difference between Nolan and me is that he hasn't had to play for the same guys I've had to play for," Fisk says. "If he had, his reaction might have been much different."

Reinsdorf refuses to take the bait. "I couldn't even begin to analyze it," he says. "I've never met Nolan Ryan." At the same time, while neither he nor Fisk can recall their last meaningful conversation, Reinsdorf has an opinion about the fundamental difference between the two legends. "Nolan Ryan apparently has a good relationship with his ballclub, and Carlton's is

something less than very good. Anytime two people have something less than a satisfactory relationship, chances are each of them did or said something inadvertently that upset the other guy. Most of the time you can assign blame to both sides."

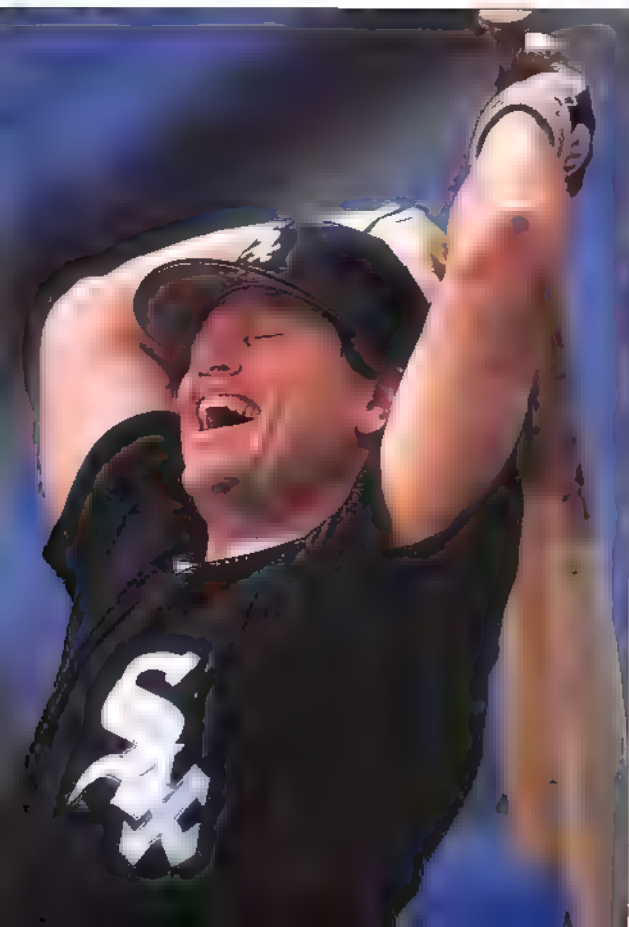
The long-running feud between Fisk and Reinsdorf is symptomatic of the fundamental problem that has rocked the foundation of the game itself: singleness of purpose, or the absence thereof. As Jack Sands, Fisk's agent, says: "The owners just refuse to accept the fact that the players are their partners. There's a foxhole mentality that exists in baseball—players on one side, owners on the other."

Ironically, Fisk's dramatic home run in Game 6 of the 1975 World Series in Boston may have been the first, unintentional shot in what has become an all-out war. The contest happened to be played in front of the largest television audience in World Series history to that time, and that memorable hit and that monumental game did much to convince the movers and shakers that baseball indeed could be sold in prime time. Shortly afterward, an independent arbiter ruled in favor of free agency and thus awarded the players the right to claim a share of the growing TV money.

Perhaps not coincidentally, Fisk has been something of a burr under the owners' saddles ever since. After the 1976 season, Fisk and teammates Rick Burleson and Fred Lynn rejected contract offers from the Red Sox and instead played out their options. Fisk eventually re-signed with the club, but his holdout and subsequent bargaining touched off a storm of protest in and around Fenway Park.

Five years later, the unthinkable hap-

**...gave Fisk a total of four pages, one page more than Terry Leach.**







## *"I don't have to defend my approach."*

rookie and impressed the kid pitcher to no end. Such behavior stands out in the age of free agency; baseball doesn't do loyalty and respect anymore, only skyboxes and valet parking.

Management's treatment of Fisk hasn't gone unnoticed by his teammates. Already having been involved in a messy arbitration case in which he was awarded a \$4 million contract last winter, McDowell has vowed to leave town before he goes through what Fisk has endured. "A lot of things have gone on around here that will contribute to my decision where to continue my career," McDowell says. "I see what has happened to Pudge, and I know the same could happen to me in a few years. It seems as though there is less loyalty and respect given to the players who deserve them."

Fisk also is big on two-way streets, but, predictably, contract negotiations hit a dead end last winter. Well aware that the market for 45-year-old catchers is limited, to say the least, the White Sox offered Fisk a \$500,000 contract, which represented a \$500,000 pay cut from the previous year, when a foot injury limited him to 188 at-bats.

When Fisk said thanks but no thanks, Reinsdorf publicly branded him as a "prima donna" and a "baby." "I think he was entitled to one year when he was paid more than he produced," Reinsdorf said, "but not two." On the other hand, Fisk has earned less than \$14 million in his White Sox career, which qualifies as a Kmart Blue-Light Special for an 11-time All-Star.

"That's the first time I've ever heard an owner criticize one of his own players, at least to that extent," McDowell says. "I mean, it's our job to promote our product, and here's the boss telling the fans that his catcher stinks—so in other words, don't bother to watch him play. I don't get it. The players' responsibility is to play hard and play the right way. Pudge always has done that. Now you know why baseball has had so many problems, and who is most responsible for them."

With his family firmly established in the southwest Chicago suburb of Lockport, Ill., Fisk knew he had virtually no leverage and finally agreed to a \$650,000 deal—yet even that came with a turn of the knife. The White Sox front office insisted it needed to

protect a young prospect on the parent club, so Fisk was all but forced to sign a minor league contract with the understanding that he would be placed on the major league roster at the first available opportunity. While the front office considered the matter to be trivial, Fisk took it as an insult to his 23 years of blood, sweat, and achievement. Is this what 375 career home runs and 2,474 games caught get you? Isn't this spot reserved for the Rich Gedmans and John Marzanos of the baseball world? Is that what Fisk has become—just another Jamie Quirk?

"You know what pisses me off most about this whole thing?" Fisk asks. "What happens if, through injury or lack of production by someone else, I have to play, say, 120 games this season? Well, there's no provision for that in my contract. It wasn't even offered to me."

"I don't feel as though I'm a part of this team anymore. How can you feel a part of it when they've already made a determination about you before the season even starts?"

Yet in the minds of many, Fisk is an aloof, bitter, cynical, egotistical, pampered, spoiled old pill—did somebody say prima donna?—who simply won't accept the fact that he's already played the 18th hole. Indeed, Fisk has received surprisingly few sympathy cards from local fans and media, who apparently have grown tired of the incessant bitching about money, money, money. One caller to an all-sports radio show in Chicago said bluntly, "I wish Fisk would set his little record and go home."

You can't help but harken back to that historic October night when a younger, more innocent Fisk frantically waved his hands once, twice, thrice toward the fair side of the Green Monster, while the nation held its collective breath. Eighteen years later, the little boy has left Fisk, replaced by a distrustful and disillusioned middle-aged man. Would things have been any different if that damned ball had hooked foul? Has the crowning moment of his career also served as its banana peel?

Fisk takes another stab at the plateful of food. With a grimace, he removes a hair from his serving of cottage cheese. "They must have known I was coming," he says wryly. ■

*We don't want to say just how "senior" senior writer PAUL LADEWSKI actually is, but he can remember when Carlton Fisk could catch a game in less than three hours.*

pened. When the Red Sox postmarked Fisk's contract two days late, the New England native who was an icon throughout the Northeast was declared a free agent. One month later, Fisk changed his Sox and signed a three-year, \$5 million contract to play in Chicago, the first major move made by the new Reinsdorf-led ownership. Even today, Reinsdorf calls Fisk's signing "one that took the franchise out of the category of being the Rodney Dangerfield of baseball."

In recent years the relationship between Fisk and Reinsdorf has made Peg and Al Bundy look like Romeo and Juliet. In 1986 then-GM Ken (Hawk) Harrelson, with Reinsdorf's tacit approval, announced in spring training that Pudge was a left fielder and gave away his catching job. (In short order, a furious Fisk was back behind the plate.) And in 1989 Fisk was among the players who split \$280 million in damages awarded when an arbiter decided club owners had acted in collusion to suppress the free-agent market. Fisk 2, owners 0.

Fisk is big on traditional values such as loyalty and respect, and he's downright proud of it. "I prepare hard, I play hard," he says. "I don't have to defend my approach." Remember, this is the guy who once bawled out Deion Sanders for dissing Yankees tradition by failing to run out a batted ball. And in his first outing with McDowell, with the White Sox hopelessly out of the race, Fisk got in the face of the



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# Whose Game Is It, Anyway?

*Baseball doesn't get it: By chasing TV and the almighty buck, it's losing the average fan*

By BOB VERDI

**I**N CASE YOU MISSED IT, THERE WAS A MORSEL OF GOOD news tossed out to baseball-starved fans during the Marge Schott investigation. You remember her: the Wicked Witch of the West, the equal-opportunity insulter who doesn't like the human race and can't understand a pennant race.

Anyway, my ears perked when I heard her fellow owners assess punishment for her incessant and insensitive babbling. Schott was suspended for a year on March 1 and fined \$25,000, the maximum an individual may be docked. Also, said Schott's lodge brothers, she can go to all games played by her Cincinnati Reds during the 1993 season. (That's not part of the penalty.)

May I repeat? *All games played by her Cincinnati Reds during the 1993 season.* I took this to mean that, despite dire forecasts to the contrary, there would be no lockout this year. There would be an Opening Day and a Closing Day and a lot of days in between. Plus a World Series in late October. (Very late, if TV has its way.) For these little favors, we should thank the baseball gods. They have unbuttoned their stuffed shirts and let their hearts fall out.

I can't say for sure that Major League Baseball is giving us baseball this summer simply because most fans aren't quite ready for our national pastime's 98th work stoppage in the last few years. No, I suspect it has something to do with the debut of expansion teams in Florida and Colorado, plus the fact that the network

television contract is entering its final lap. If "Game of the Week" ratings already are down, they really would suffer with no game any week, no? Maybe, too, baseball's leaders, wherever they are, have detected that they're on the wrong end of a serious image crisis.

Of course, any perceptions about baseball are not nearly as regrettable as certain realities. In the March issue of this magazine (Alexa on the cover!), Marvin Miller properly cautioned us about burying baseball. As former head of the Major League Baseball Players Association, Miller brought the sport into the 20th century. He knows that the current roster of owners and players, no matter how selfish and narrow-minded they might be, are not going to destroy baseball. They might try, but the game isn't theirs. They're just renting it. The game belongs to us, the fans, and they can't have it.

Still, there is something rotten in the state of Pennsylvania when the Pittsburgh Pirates either can't or won't keep a very nice team intact under the threat of fiscal exhaustion. The Pirates have done everything right—scouted well, taught well, hired well, executed well—and Jim



Leyland, the sport's best manager, has produced three straight National League East titles. However, free agency has decimated the Bucs. The Pirates haven't even been able to trade away big-ticket players for smaller salaries—they've lost Bobby Bonilla, Barry Bonds, and Doug Drabek to the system. Talented young players Kevin Young, Al Martin, and Carlos Garcia are ably filling key roles this year, but sooner or later—and probably in 1993—attrition will speak.

A system that inhibits competition needs to be fixed. In baseball the onus of revenue-



**In today's tug-of-war, sometimes it seems to be baseball lovers against the millionaires—owners and players alike.**

sharing, as Miller pointed out, always seems to be placed on the players. The last time I checked the NFL and NBA, management was leading the way in such matters. And the last time I checked the schedule, it read "Yankees-Mariners": George Frankensteinbrenner wouldn't be able to pocket 10 times what Seattle does for a cablecast of a game from Yankee Stadium if the M's didn't cooperate by showing up. But here are owners asking the players to do the heavy lifting.

The essence of the problem is lack of trust. Nobody believes anybody. Management warns that the game is pointed inexorably toward disaster, yet at the annual winter meetings in Louisville half the owners spent like drunken sailors while the others stayed below, holding the line and becoming rather nauseated. The facts, please. Is baseball in trouble or isn't it? The owners can't even agree among themselves, and the players are blamed for skepticism?

Why, the owners can't even concur on the first step toward repairs. Fay Vincent quits to avoid being fired on Labor Day, the rap being here's a commissioner too soft for lockout hard-liners. So what happens while his replacement is sought? Owners can't decide what kind of commissioner they want, and all that momentum for a lockout vanishes. Meanwhile, back at mission control, Richard Ravitch says the game should go on, and he proposes a plan whereby owners spread the wealth more



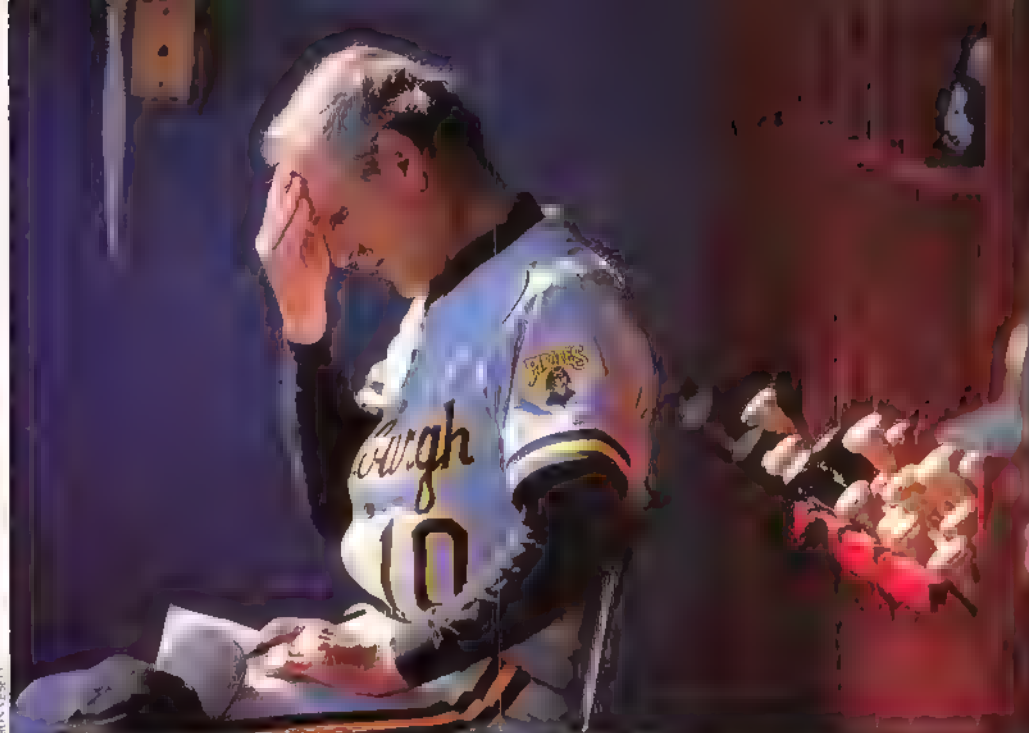
equitably. Who's Richard Ravitch? The negotiator the clubs hired to deal with the union. Confused? You tell me, given the prevailing hostilities, how baseball owners and players can develop a partnership or co-existence such as the NBA enjoys.

The owners hate the players and knock them as overpaid blokes (a tantrum that, by the way, does nothing but diminish the product; if fans hear bosses whine about fat and sassy athletes, eventually the message will register). The players hate the owners, who can't control themselves. Meanwhile, the public has grown to hate both sides, an alienation factor that must be addressed.

Forget for a minute that baseball has ceased to be the preferred sport of the inner city or that black faces are becoming scarcer than ever in the stands. Let's look at the bigger picture and all its negatives. Baseball, simply put, has lost touch with its roots. Baseball, more than any other sport, lends itself to conversation, around the batting cage in July and the "hot-stove league" in January. Baseball is blessed with a pace that no other game has, for there is no clock. Baseball also presents us daily stories—lots of games every day in several venues. Yet, is baseball talked about as frequently as it once was, or in such fond terms? I think not.

Baseball has been around forever. The modern NFL fully arrived in the late '50s, and the NBA well after that, yet those two industries have caught and passed baseball through superior presentation. You won't get me to admit that baseball is a lesser product, although there are stagnant moments—standardize that strike zone, and if athletes have to step out of the batter's box to scratch themselves let them do it on their time, not ours—but basketball and football have marketed themselves while baseball has wallowed in infighting and technical difficulties. Even hockey, the sleepest of all potential giants, has brought in a new commissioner, Gary Bettman, for a belated visit to the 20th century before the 21st arrives.

And where is baseball? Being lapped by the field, despite its vulnerability and because of its vulnerability. Recall the remark from Sid Bream, who huffed and puffed his way around third base to score the winning run in last season's most dramatic game, the Atlanta Braves' stirring



**Loyland's Bucs were scuttled not by better teams, but by big-market money.**

come-from-behind victory over Pittsburgh in Game 7 of the National League playoffs. In the afterglow of the pennant party, Bream was asked if he could imagine a more perfect scenario. Yes, he said. If my son had been watching, it would have been even better. But his son was asleep in bed, because Daddy didn't slide into home plate until around midnight.

Vin Scully, the Hall of Fame broadcaster, raises his hand here. Television is blasted for starting so many postseason games so

is made at 8:38 p.m. in the East. I believe the word for this is "counterproductive."

And if baseball doesn't find a solution soon, who will fill all the seats in 10 or 20 years? Probably not America's children of today, because they were in bed where they should have been, too, just like Bream's son. Thus, a double whammy: Baseball's adult fans are dropping like flies out of disgust, and the next generation is being lost to the NBA, which somehow manages to survive despite broadcasting the occasional big game during the afternoon.

Baseball's arrogance manifests itself in other ways. Somewhere along the way, probably en route to the bank, management and players have remembered to forget the common folk. Don't tell me fame and fortune have corrupted. There's no finer athlete on the planet than Michael Jordan, but somehow, perhaps partly because he works for a league that reaches out to people, Jordan always finds time to spread the gospel.

I see less and less of that in baseball. Too many superstars are too busy being busy, and perish the thought that fans be allowed to grow attached to a roster, or to even one hero. Free agency, which is legal, begets a certain amount of transiency, but if owners can spend so much snagging other team's players, why can't they spend more on keeping a few of their own?

And now that free agent David Letterman has bolted to CBS, another question: Does his late night show come on after a World Series game or before? ■

*Award-winning columnist BOB VERDI examined Chicago's sports heroes in February.*

*Baseball's adult fans are walking away in disgust, and the next generation is being lost to the NBA, which survives despite airing big games during the afternoon.*

late, but as Scully says, the money TV gets from advertisers for prime time is the money baseball demands to pay its bills. It isn't television's fault. Point well taken, but here's where I lose a handle. Baseball's marquee games in October are shown on prime time to reach a greater audience, yet the ratings continue to tumble because too many people can't last when the first pitch

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**The Table Is**

## *In Oakland, everything is ready for Mark McGwire to become the main man*

By GLENN DICKEY

“Mark McGwire has to step forward as a leader. Mark has always been a guy who just kind of sat back and did his thing, but with this new contract he's got to do more than that. I don't expect him to get out of his personality, but he has to be a guy who, in the clubhouse, if he sees somebody who's not doing his job, will step forward and say, 'That's not how we do it around here.'” —Oakland A's manager Tony La Russa

**I**N TONY LA RUSSA'S MIND, THE image of Mark McGwire has gradually calcified. The big redhead is a fixture at first base, where he fields with a grace and dexterity that belies his burly 6'5", 250-pound frame, and the power contained in his retooled batting stroke is undeniable. However, the A's manager wants more. McGwire has always carried the big stick, but La Russa wants the "speak softly" bit to end.

McGwire disputes his manager's views, but true to his nature, he disputes them mildly. "I think I've done that for the past couple of seasons," he says. "It's the kind of thing a veteran player does."

"Listen, I'm never going to be a rah-rah kind of guy. That's not my personality. If we're looking for somebody who can do that type of thing, the kind of thing Dave Stewart and Carney Lansford did for us, Terry Steinbach is probably the guy who will do it. Steiny has kind of grown into that over the years, and he's comfortable with it. But really, the whole thing of leadership on this club is overdone. We're a close-knit team, and we have been for some time. When the new guys come to the club, they just fit right in. They're just very comfortable with us, because they see we know how to play and don't have a lot of personality clashes. I see no reason that will change."

"As for me, well, the important thing is that I lead by example. What I do out there on the field is very important. I know how much the team relies on me, and of course I'll speak up in the clubhouse when I feel it's necessary, but on this team I don't think it'll be necessary very often. We know what we have to do."

Like it or not, though, McGwire has

entered a new phase in his career. As good as he has been, when people used to think of the player who typified the A's they thought of Jose Canseco. Not only was Canseco the "Bash Brother" who seemed most likely to spend his career in an Oakland uniform, but he was articulate and willing to share his views on almost everything with the entire world. McGwire, by contrast, had been a secondary figure, even geographically; his locker was in the back of the A's dressing room, while Canseco's was at the front.

However, the situation changed suddenly and dramatically last August, when, in a move that caught the baseball world by surprise, Canseco was traded to the Texas Rangers for slugging outfielder Ruben Sierra. And the new direction was further emphasized during the offseason when McGwire signed a five-year, \$28 million contract, the richest deal in A's history. Clearly, McGwire is now the key player for the team.

"I think I've always been very visible," says McGwire, laughing. "I just haven't been in the papers as much as Jose. I'm out in public a lot, and I'm a big guy, so it's hard to miss me."

But McGwire understands how much he and his career have changed since he exploded onto the scene in 1987. "I've changed a lot since then," he admits. "I've even changed physically. When I look at pictures of myself back then I think, 'What a skinny guy.' I've put on a good 25 pounds." McGwire laughs again. "I've let my hair get curly in the back, and I've got a goatee. Totally different look, right?"

"But the biggest change is mental. I've come to realize that's the biggest thing separating guys who make it from those who

**There's no questioning McGwire's powerful stroke, good for 42 homers in '92.**





**Tough act to follow: The Bash Brothers had charisma and a World Series title.**

don't. There are a lot of guys playing Triple-A ball who are good enough to play in the majors, but they don't have the right mental attitude."

**S**uccess in the big leagues came easily for McGwire at the outset. His rookie season was something out of a Frank Merriwell story: By the All-Star break he had cranked 33 home runs, and by season's end he had blasted a major league rookie record 49 homers and rung up a .289 batting average and 118 RBIs.

"When I look back at '87, I realize I just didn't have any idea what was happening," says McGwire. "I was just going out there, and good things were happening. I didn't know why. I'd like to say I really studied the pitchers and all that, but I didn't. I just swung the bat."

That was Phase 1 of McGwire's career. Phase 2 kicked in the next year. In 1988 his batting average declined to .260, and it slipped even further in the next two years, to .231 and .235. His power production slipped, too, but he still hit 32, 33, and 39 homers in those three seasons, with RBI totals of 99, 95, and 108. Not that anyone was complaining; despite the dropoff, he joined Hank Sauer as the only players to hit more than 30 homers in each of their first four full seasons.

And then in 1991, McGwire hit bottom. His batting average was a pitiful .201, and it might have gone even lower if La Russa hadn't held him out of the last couple of games of the season to save him the embarrassment of falling below the dreaded "Mendoza Line" of .200. American League pitchers seemed to have solved

McGwire; with Mark sitting well off the plate, they fed him a steady diet of pitches on the outside corner. If he hit them at all, he mostly popped them up to right field instead of driving them to left. That season his power numbers dipped to just 22 home runs and 75 RBIs. It seemed the big red-head was on his way out of baseball.

Was McGwire being intimidated by the pitchers? Was he setting up so far off the plate because he was afraid of brushback pitches? "No," he says emphatically. "I realize that's part of the game. Pitchers try to keep you off the plate, and you just have to establish your position. I thought I was in a position to hit any strikes that were thrown."

But, in fact, he wasn't. McGwire often seemed to just wave at pitches. He looked so lost at the plate it was rumored he would drop out of baseball and join the pro golf tour. The scuttlebutt seemed credible because he had played golf in high school, and it's common knowledge that he hits a golf ball as far as just about anybody who plays the links for a living.

However, McGwire laughs it off. "I don't know where that came from," he says. "I think trying to make a living on the PGA tour is much tougher than baseball. I hadn't even played golf for years." McGwire didn't lay off the links out of fear that golfing would hurt his baseball swing, either. He doesn't subscribe to that theory. "Actually," he says, "my baseball swing is a lot like my golf swing, because I have a tendency to uppercut the ball and hit a lot of fly balls. I just haven't had the time to do any serious golfing in the last couple of years."

Another part of his game bothered

McGwire in 1991, too: He felt weak. Everything is relative, of course—Mark McGwire's weakest day would be the strongest day of most people's lives—but McGwire's strength is crucial to his hitting. When he's on his game he overpowers the ball for those towering home runs, but in '91 he couldn't do that with any regularity.

"I had gotten away from lifting weights for the first time," he says. "In the off-season I usually do a lot of weightlifting, but I hardly did any at all before the [1991] season, and I really felt it. I just didn't feel strong at all."

The '91 campaign was unquestionably the worst experience of his athletic life. "I just couldn't wait for the end of the season," he says. "For the first time in my life, I wasn't enjoying the game. It was no fun at all." But while his performance suffered, McGwire's character withstood the tough testing. Unlike many athletes who turn sullen or even vicious when they're struggling, McGwire stoically answered every question. "I faced everybody," he says simply. "I never hid. But I didn't have a lot of answers. I kept saying, 'There's still time in the season for my numbers to pick up,' but then the season ran out."

The difficulties weren't confined to his life between the lines. McGwire tries to keep his private life private, but there have been some obvious problems. He's divorced, and another relationship with a woman broke up during the '91 season. "I shouldn't have let that bother me," he says. "I should have been able to separate that part of my life from what was happening on the field, but I couldn't always do that."

**T**hese days McGwire is much more relaxed when he talks about his career because in 1992 he rediscovered the sweet stroke. He averaged .268 and, more importantly, brought his power totals back to 42 homers and 104 RBIs. A rib cage injury late in the season limited him to 139 games and kept him from making a run at his rookie homer total, but with 22 doubles, more than half of his 125 hits went for extra bases. And his on-base average, which many baseball people consider a more significant statistic than batting average, was an excellent .386.

What's his secret? To hear him tell it, there is no secret. "Mechanics are really overrated," McGwire says. "If you go up to the plate thinking you have to have your hands in a certain place at a certain time, you're dead."

"I don't even believe in talking to other players much, because every hitter is different. When Jose was here we might talk in generalities about what a pitcher was throwing, but that was about it. We're so

different as hitters it didn't make much sense to compare our swings. What worked for him wouldn't necessarily work for me, and vice versa. The ability to hit home runs is a God-given talent—if you don't have that, it doesn't make any difference how you stand at the plate or how you swing a bat."

Before the '92 campaign began, McGwire concentrated on regaining the form that had made him an integral part of the Bash Brothers. "The first thing I did was to get back on the weights," he says. "I probably did more lifting the winter before last than I'd done since I started playing professionally."

"Then I just started thinking of what I'd done before when I'd been successful. I went back to my pigeon-toed stance and moved in on the plate a little—just went back to the things I'd done before. It wasn't like I did anything really different. Mostly I just did what I'd always done, and it

worked. I was the 'old' Mark McGwire again."

As much as anything, though, McGwire's success in '92 was a result of his improved mental state. "I don't think I really understood what was happening with this game until last year," he says. "I finally understood how to handle the pressure. This year I played in the AT&T golf tournament at Pebble Beach, and I was in the 'A' group, which had the big galleries. Well, three years ago I couldn't have handled that. I would have come all undone to see all those people. But this year it didn't bother me at all."

"It's the same way on the baseball field. I like to see the big crowds. I like to play in the big games. People ask me, 'Isn't that a lot of pressure?' But that's what you want. I like to come up there with the game on the line. I'm really focused then."

"When I started," McGwire adds, "I wasn't like that at all, because there were

other players who were expected to carry the load. But it's a whole lot different for me now than in '87. I've got a much bigger salary, and I've been around long enough that people expect a lot from me."

He delivered in '92, and his return to form couldn't have been timed more perfectly, because he was a free agent at the end of the season. McGwire's agent, Bob Cohen, talked with several clubs; McGwire didn't rule anybody out, though he admits he didn't know if he could play in New York "without going insane." The key, though, was "being happy inside" with his decision.

"It really wasn't a matter of money, because I'd have been able to get a good contract wherever I went," McGwire says. "I really wanted to know what the A's intended to do. They originally said they wanted to cut the payroll back to \$30 million. If that's all they were going to do, if they were going to cut back to the point where they couldn't put a good team on the field, I didn't want to come back."

A's general manager Sandy Alderson now admits he misjudged the market—he had thought that baseball owners meant it when they talked about the necessity of having fiscal responsibility and cutting back costs. Ho, ho, ho. In fact, the baseball winter meetings in December, usually fairly quiet affairs, produced more big free-agent signings than any in history. So much for fiscal responsibility, and so much for Alderson's plan to reduce the payroll. The GM realized he had to raise his sights to keep the team competitive, and he negotiated seriously to bring back Steinbach, McGwire, and Sierra.

Steinbach was the first to sign. "It wasn't so much that I was waiting for Terry to sign as I was waiting for the A's to show they were serious about keeping a good team together," McGwire says. "Once they signed Terry, I could see that they were." McGwire signed just before Christmas, a dandy present for A's fans, and Sierra joined the fold a few days later.

"I'm really happy to be back with Oakland," McGwire says. "I've had some good times here, and I've really enjoyed being a part of the championship teams. But I wouldn't have come back if I didn't think we had a really good chance to win again."

This season, and for the immediate future, McGwire will have a lot to say about that. And if his manager has his way, he'll be saying it in the clubhouse as well as on the field. ■

Contributing writer GLENN DICKEY, a veteran of the Bay Area sports scene, profiled the emergence of 49ers quarterback Steve Young in the February INSIDE SPORTS.

**A natural: "Mechanics are overrated. The ability to hit home runs is God-given."**







*The long-awaited  
showdown between  
Chavez and Whitaker  
heads our list of five  
fights that must  
be fought, so...*

## Let's Get Ready To Rumble

BY JEFF RYAN

**O**NE OF THESE DAYS THE macho posturing will cease, the last insult will bounce harmlessly off one guy's pumped-up chest, the pen will prove mightier than the forked tongue, and Riddick Bowe and Lennox Lewis finally will sign a contract for boxing's most anticipated showdown. However, until Bowe and Lewis unite the heavyweight title, probably sometime in 1994, the sweet science has two choices: It can remain stagnant and enslaved both to politics and to the whims of the two fighters' camps, or it can get off its lazy butt and create other, maybe even better matchups that will get its faltering heart pumping and its blood circulating again.

We've come up with five of those can't-live-without-'em battles, dynamite duke-outs that feature everyone from the sport's best puncher to its premier boxer. These

fights are selected not only because the mesh of styles guarantees they'll be pleasing to the eye, but because they'll also answer some lingering questions and provide some intriguing subplots. Let's get these matchups off these pages and onto a marquee—and fast!

■ **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ (WBC super lightweight champion, 86-0, 71 KOs) vs. PERNELL WHITAKER (WBC welterweight champion, 32-1, 15 KOs)**

Chavez and Whitaker are fighters standing on the doorstep of true greatness. The Mexican has arrived there by virtue of an unbeaten record, titles in three divisions, and a miraculous 1990 KO of Meldrick Taylor. Whitaker boasts three titles of his own and a gold medal from the '84 Olympics. One of these fighters is going to walk through the door to immortality, but

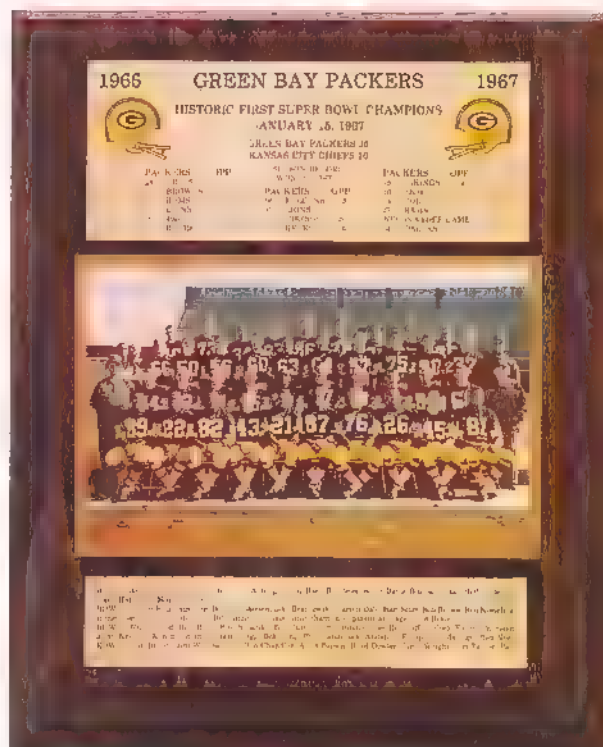
**The magnificent Chavez still hasn't proved he's the world's best fighter.**

to get there he's going to have to use the other as a doormat. This long-awaited clash is now scheduled for September 10 at San Antonio's new Alamodome, with Whitaker's welterweight belt at stake.

Why do fighters with a combined record of 118-1 still have something to prove? For one thing, Chavez was two seconds away from losing a decision to the best opponent he ever faced, so his win over Taylor is as diminished by some pundits as it is lauded by others. Whitaker, meanwhile—despite a loss to Jose Luis Ramirez, arguably the worst decision of the '80s—has been the most dominant lightweight champion since Roberto Duran. He's lost perhaps a dozen rounds in nine title fights, and he turned back respected foes Rafael Pineda and

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- ☐ 1969 N.Y. METS (World Series Champions)
- ☐ 1968 DETROIT TIGERS (World Series Champions)
- ☐ 1966 BALTIMORE ORIOLES (World Series Champions)
- ☐ 1965 L.A. DODGERS (World Series Champions)
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- ☐ 1962 N.Y. YANKEES (World Series Champions)
- ☐ 1960 PITTSBURGH PIRATES (World Series Champions)
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Buddy McGirt to win junior welterweight and welterweight crowns, respectively. Nine years into his pro career, Whitaker's never been pushed, and critics still don't know whether he's capable of surviving a bad cut or the kind of savage war that proves a champion's mettle.

Whitaker-Chavez is a classic boxer-puncher matchup, but with a twist: The stylish Whitaker, the premier boxer in the game, wears his rivals down with a punishing body attack, while the mauling Chavez can turn into an effective technician when the situation warrants. To remain unbeaten, Chavez will have to overcome a fighter who's just as fast as Taylor yet superior defensively. For Whitaker to win, he has to absorb the hardest punch he's ever faced and find a way to hold off a champion who walked right through the bombs of power-hitters such as Edwin Rosario, Jose Luis Ramirez, and Roger Mayweather.

This bout's winner is the best fighter, pound for pound, in the world, period. Chavez and Whitaker have never ducked anyone—except in the ring, where both still masterfully practice the dying art of defense. Their matchup is a throwback to another era, when the picture on the TV was black and white, the voice was unmistakably Don Dunphy's, and Gillette, not a heavyweight named Ruddock, was the most famous razor in boxing.

■ **TERRY NORRIS (WBC super welterweight champion, 34-3, 20 KOs) vs. ROY JONES (middleweight, 21-0, 20 KOs)**

There's no room for a "learning experience" in today's fight game. Lose a fight, and before you even lose your confidence the promoters and TV networks have lost your phone number. In the 1940s and '50s a loss was a character builder, but in the '80s and '90s it's become a setback of monumental proportions.

However, Norris is a modern-day rarity: He has lost three fights yet can legitimately claim to be one of the three best fighters, pound for pound, in the world. Norris fell in two rounds to Julian Jackson in 1989 but followed that heartbreak by winning the 154-pound title and making eight defenses. Two-time champion Meldrick Taylor lasted just four rounds against him, and after being knocked out by "Terrible" Terry, Sugar Ray Leonard and Donald Curry staggered past their corner stools and flopped into rocking chairs—they retired instantly. However, Norris' biggest wins have come against aging challengers or smaller men moving up in weight.

After being robbed of a gold medal by a bad decision in Seoul in '88, Jones decided to vent his anger on his pro opponents. He



has been frighteningly destructive, scoring 13 KOs within three rounds. He reminds ringsiders not of the great middleweights of the past, but of two great heavyweights. The mixture of speed and power is reminiscent of a young Mike Tyson, and the cockiness, the bolo-punching, and the hands held defiantly at his waist are pure Muhammad Ali.

Norris is the more polished and experienced technician, but he would be adding six pounds for this climb to middleweight, and that would be the great equalizer. "Norris continues to get better, and Jones is a Sugar Ray Leonard, only stronger," says ESPN announcer Barry Tompkins. "How many times do you go into a fight and really not know who will win? That's why this is a terrific marquee fight."

And where might that marquee be? Only one hotel in Las Vegas or Atlantic City would be appropriate for Jones' biggest performance: the Showboat.

■ **JAMES TONEY (IBF super middleweight champion, 36-0-2, 25 KOs) vs.**

**Can the stylish Whitaker survive the kind of savage war Chavez wages?**

■ **JULIAN JACKSON (WBC middleweight champion, 46-1, 43 KOs)**

The middleweight division never has been a place for the faint of heart. Though the two Sugar Rays and the stylish Carlos Monzon have resided there, the weight class always has been appealing for its rumble-in-a-dark-alley image. Jake LaMotta mauled there, Tony Zale and Rocky Graziano brawled there, and Marvin Hagler was bald there. It's where "Hit Man" Hearns did some of his bloodiest rubouts and Vito Antuofermo did his best bleeding.

The middleweights are known for wars of attrition, and Toney-Jackson has an excellent chance to live up to that reputation. Or it just might end in 50 seconds, the length of Jackson's February 1992 fight with Ismael Negron. "We're two very tough guys who could end it with one punch at any time," Jackson says.

As we went to press, Jackson was scheduled to defend against Gerald McCiellan,

but regardless of that outcome, a Jackson-Toney shootout must be made. It's that explosive. Jackson, the game's hardest puncher, often nails his victim with a pulverizing punch and then runs a thumb across his own throat to signal that the poor guy isn't getting up. Toney, whose face looks like it belongs on a warning label of a bottle of poison, is the sport's meanest competitor. He's been known to explode at his own handlers, he once tried to attack his rival's lawyer after a bout, and he tries to pick fights at weigh-ins. And that's when he's in a good mood. This one should sell for \$19.95 on pay-per-view—and throw in the weigh-in for an extra two bucks.

Jackson's style is straight-ahead missile-launching. Toney—a home run hitter who bludgeoned unbeaten Michael Nunn in May of 1991—might engage him, or he might box, subjecting Jackson to a style he's not used to seeing. One guarantee: It won't go the distance. The only mystery is whether the loser will go out quickly, or if the brawl will be so brutal that the winner will be peeking at his adoring fans through a mask of blood.

Bet on the latter, an outcome that should put a crooked smile on the scarred faces of old-time middleweights everywhere.

■ **TONY LOPEZ (WBA lightweight champion, 42-3-1, 29 KOs) vs. OSCAR DE LA HOYA (lightweight, 6-0, 5 KOs)**

When Whitaker vacated the undisputed lightweight title in 1992, the 135-pound division instantly became the land of opportunity. Within a year the championship was split into three versions, each

held by a titlist far less formidable than the dominant Whitaker. That's one reason de la Hoya, upon winning his pro debut last November, told his managers he could capture a world crown right then. Confidence, if you haven't guessed, is not a problem here.

De la Hoya wasn't ready for a title shot after one fight as a pro, but he should be after just one year in the big leagues. And that says a lot about his skills and potential. The only U.S. boxer to pan gold in Barcelona has lovingly embraced the pro style. The smooth boxing ability he showed as an amateur is still evident, but now he's become a fearsome puncher with either hand, and a chilling finisher.

The irresistible fists of de la Hoya would be seriously tested by the immovable chin of Tony Lopez. "The Tiger" has been stopped just once in 46 outings and has earned his stripes by winning titles in two weight classes. He had two reigns as IBF junior lightweight champion, courageously coming back to regain the crown from John-John Molina, the man who had ended his first reign via TKO. And as an underdog, Lopez lifted the WBA lightweight title with a dramatic come-from-behind KO of Joey Gamache last October.

Lopez can box or punch but prefers brawling to take advantage of his upper-body strength. Because he usually fights to the level of his opponent, he makes every one of his bouts entertaining. "I've been at this so long that I need a fight that'll pump me up," says the 30-year-old Lopez. "It'll be easy to get ready for a de la Hoya. If I'm pumped, I'm gonna hurt him."

"He comes straight in, receiving a lot of

punches," counters the gold medalist. "Fighters like that get outsmarted."

Winning a title at the age of 20 would be a terrific way for de la Hoya to kick off what could be a Hall of Fame career. On the other hand, Lopez's trophy case already holds two title belts. Now he'd like to make room for an Oscar.

■ **MICHAEL CARBAJAL (WBC-IBF junior flyweight champion, 28-0, 16 KOs) vs. SCOTTY OLSON (flyweight, 23-1, 18 KOs)**

While Carbajal and Olson aren't exactly Mike Tyson and George Foreman, they are relentless powerhitters who should be stars. Carbajal is the more polished talent, Olson the more engaging personality. You want action? Ask either guy what a feeling-out round is, and you'll get a shrug of the shoulders and a blank stare in return.

The fighters met at the '88 Olympics in Seoul, with eventual silver medalist Carbajal taking a decision. The loss so disheartened the Canadian Olson that he briefly gave up boxing and sold vacuum cleaners. Fully recovered from that heart-break and extremely confident, he now wants to roll over Carbajal like an Electrolux on a shag carpet.

Carbajal had to suck it up himself in March, climbing off the deck twice before KOing WBC titlist Humberto Gonzalez in seven rounds. "Little Hands of Stone" has made seven defenses of his crown, but with Gonzalez bounced the division lacks marquee opponents. A shootout with "Bulldog" Olson is a guaranteed thriller. Like a tiny Tyson, Olson will be on Carbajal's chest as though he's been stuck there with Krazy Glue. The lanky Carbajal will plan to box, but as in nearly every bout he's had, he quickly will be lured into the type of alley fight he relishes.

The only holdup to this bout has been a haggling over four pounds. Flyweight Olson weighs 112; junior fly Carbajal is 108. Carbajal says he wouldn't be comfortable at 112, and the muscular Olson feels a drop to 108 will rob him of his strength. Unfortunately, the fighters' weight problem has become the fans' wait problem.

Let's get on with it! Compromise and fight at 110. After all, a few pounds shouldn't be enough to stonewall a great clash. Boxing's overlooked diminutive dynamos deserve some attention, and the action-craving public deserves a fight that's sure to make "Rocky" look like "Fried Green Tomatoes." ■

*Another great matchup: a boxing story and contributing writer JEFF RYAN. In June Jeff stepped out of the ring to pen a piece on Yankees center fielders.*

**Four Dream Battles That Would Have Been Classics**

■ **Jake LaMotta vs. Rocky Graziano.** The two blood-and-guts Italians grew up friends on the New York streets and even did time together in the same reform school. Though reluctant to fight each other, they did sign for a 1950 bout when the Raging Bull was middleweight champ. However, when Graziano broke his hand in training camp, the fight was canceled and never rescheduled. (Note: We'd also like to have seen a Robert DeNiro-Paul Newman bout on the undercard.)

■ **Roberto Duran vs. Alexis Arguello.** Between them the two Latin legends scored 126 knockouts and won titles in seven weight classes. Although everybody craved it, this showdown for the undisputed machismo championship of the world never materialized because Duran had too many cravings of his own. The two fighters were only five pounds apart in 1978, but by '83 Duran's insatiable appetite had increased the gap to 20.

■ **Thomas Hearns vs. Aaron Pryor.** Because he found himself starved for marquee opponents at 140 pounds in 1981, WBA titlist Pryor was considered a sure bet to move up to welterweight. A battle of punchers with Hearns was rumored, but Hit Man's 6'1" frame was filling out too quickly; by the end of the year Hearns was a full-fledged 154-pounder, and Pryor was still punching out the no-names.

■ **Sugar Ray Leonard vs. Pipino Cuevas.** This welterweight battle between His Sweetness and a guy who literally broke bones with his punches was being proposed for May 1980, but a variety of political maneuverings by the WBA and WBC killed it. WBC champ Leonard met Duran instead and lost a decision, while WBA king Cuevas was left for Hearns, who crushed him in two rounds.—J.R.



**What does the NBA do with the money it collects in fines and suspensions?**

**T.M., Arlington, Texas**

"The commissioner chooses from a wide array of charities," says Rod Thorn, vice president of basketball operations for the NBA. According to Thorn, this season alone the league has collected more than \$400,000 in fines and suspension money (the pay a player forfeits when he's forced to sit out of competition). Included in that total are the monies from the Phoenix Suns-New York Knicks fiasco in March, which reportedly added up to more than \$240,000.

**Has there ever been a scoreless and penalty-free hockey game?**

**F.H., Washington, D.C.**

Yes. On February 20, 1944, a season-record crowd filled Chicago Stadium to watch the Toronto Maple Leafs and Chicago Blackhawks skate to an infraction-free 0-0 tie. The Blackhawks went on to the Stanley Cup Finals that season, where they lost to the Montreal Canadiens in four games.

**Do the '93 Atlanta Braves have the best starting rotation in baseball history?**

**M.K., Atlanta**

The Braves have put together a terrific young staff this season, but they face stiff competition if they want to be considered the best of all time. Two teams have featured four 20-game winners in their rotations: the 1920 Chicago White Sox, who sent Red Faber (23-13, 2.99 ERA), Lefty Williams (22-14, 3.91), Eddie Cicotte (21-10, 3.26), and Dickie Kerr (21-9, 3.37) to the mound; and the 1971 Baltimore Orioles, with Dave McNally (21-5, 2.89 ERA), Pat Dobson (20-8, 2.90), Jim Palmer (20-9, 2.68), and Mike Cuellar (20-9, 3.08). Other great staffs that have to be considered include the 1954 Cleveland Indians, with Bob Lemon (23-7, 2.72 ERA), Early Wynn (23-11, 2.73), Mike Garcia (19-8, 2.64), Art Houtteman (15-7, 3.35) and Bob Feller (13-3, 3.09); the 1980 Orioles, with Cy Young recipient Steve Stone (25-7, 3.23 ERA), Scott McGregor (20-8, 3.32), Mike Flanagan (16-13, 4.12), and Jim Palmer (16-10, 3.98); and the 1983 White Sox, with Cy Young winner LaMarr Hoyt (24-10, 3.66



**The punches the Knicks and Suns threw were kisses compared to the hit the NBA put on their wallets.**

ERA), Richard Dotson (22-7, 3.23), Floyd Bannister (16-10, 3.35), Jerry Koosman (11-7, 4.77), and Britt Burns (10-11, 3.58). At the end of the season, we'll see where the Braves staff rates.

**Has any baseball player ever hit a home run in the major leagues both before the age of 20 and after the age of 40?**

**W.F., Baton Rouge**

Hall-of-Famer Ty Cobb and Rusty Staub each accomplished this rare feat. Cobb hit his first home run at the age of 19, when he broke in with the Detroit Tigers in 1905, and he managed to hit six home runs after the age of 40. He retired from the game in 1928 at the age of 42, with a career total of 118 home runs.

Staub, who broke in with the Houston Colt 45s in 1963, hit four home runs as a 19-year-old and two as a quadragenarian. "*Le Grand Orange*" retired in 1985 at the age of 41 with 292 career roundtrippers.

**What team shot the highest field goal percentage in an NCAA basketball championship game?**

**R.L., Huntington Beach, Calif.**

In 1985 the Villanova Wildcats shocked the college hoops world when they defeated the heavily favored defending champion Georgetown Hoyas 66-64 in Lexington, Ky. The Wildcats, who had lost to the Hoyas twice during the regular season, pulled off the upset by shooting a record 78% from the floor (22 of 28, 9 of 10 in the second half).

**Who was the first modern-day black quarterback in the NFL?**

**B.M., Long Island, N.Y.**

The quarterback of Michigan State's national championship team, the aptly named Willie Thrower, signed with the Chicago Bears as a free agent in 1953 and became the league's first black quarterback to take a snap in a game on October 18, when he came off the bench to go three-for-eight for 27 yards in a loss to the San Francisco 49ers at Wrigley Field. Unfortunately for Thrower, those would be the only stats he would compile for the Bears; he was released the following year, when Chicago drafted quarterback Zeke Bratkowski out of Georgia and Ed Brown returned from a hitch in the U.S. Army.

Thrower went on to play football in Canada for three seasons.

**Who hit the first home run in the Houston Astrodome?**

**T.R., Philadelphia**

In the Dedication Night exhibition game played on April 9, 1965, the New York Yankees' Mickey Mantle cranked the dome's first dinger, a 6th-inning clout off Dick Farrell. Richie Allen of the Philadelphia Phillies blasted the first official roundtripper in the Astrodome three days later, when he connected for a two-run homer off Bob Bruce in the 3rd inning.

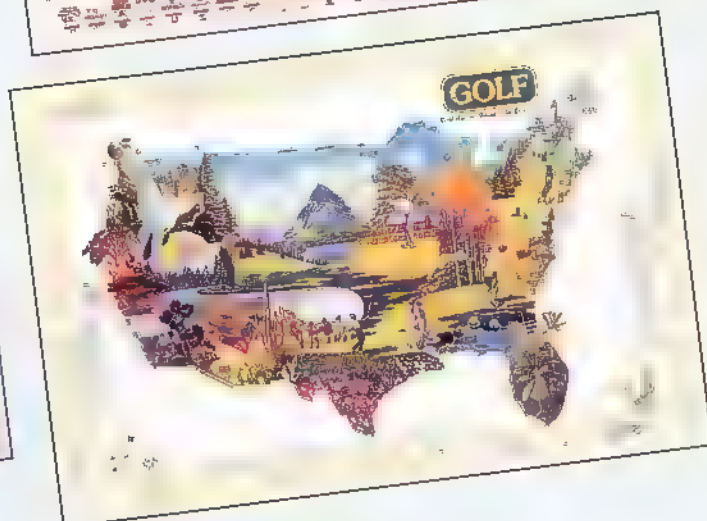
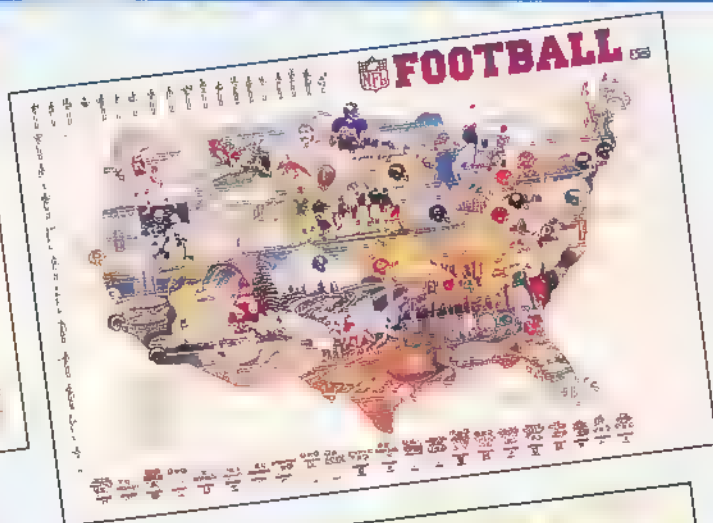
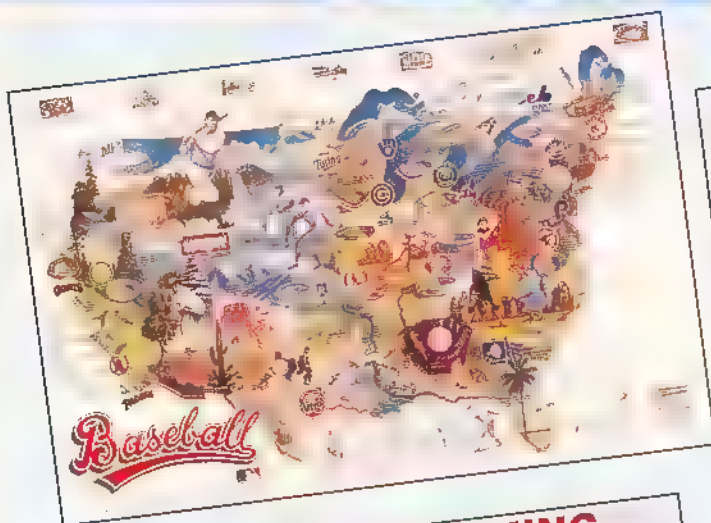
**Who was the last player to play on an NCAA champion and an NBA champion in consecutive seasons?**

**D.C., Gary, Ind.**

Billy Thompson played for the University of Louisville in 1986 when the Cardinals defeated the Duke Blue Devils 72-69 for the NCAA crown. Thompson contributed 13 points to the victory. In 1986 Thompson was drafted by the Atlanta Hawks and then traded to the Los Angeles Lakers for Mike McGee; the Lakers went on to win the NBA title for the 1986-87 season when they topped the Boston Celtics in six games. Thompson averaged 5.6 points a game in his rookie season. ■

*To get the behind-the-scenes scoops that the record books don't always cover, send your questions to Inside Out, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.*

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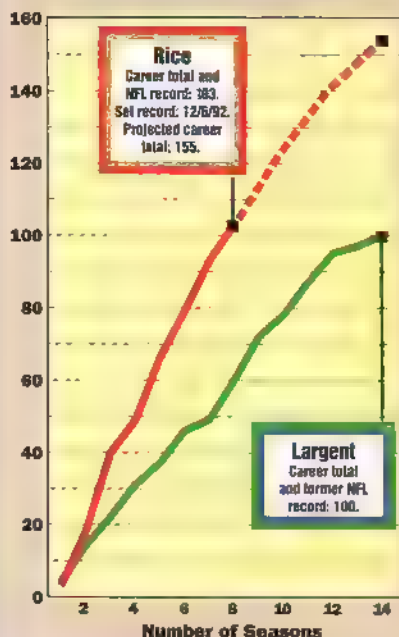


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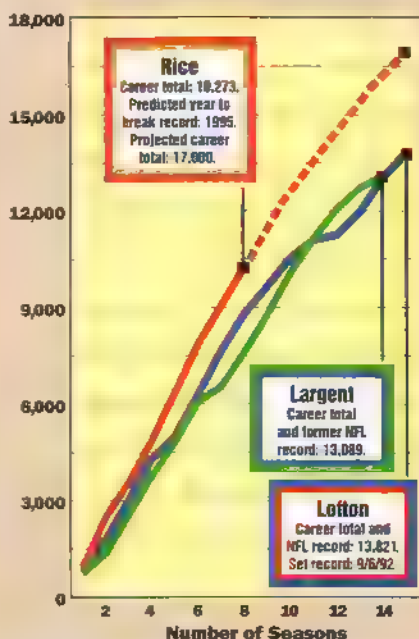
## RICE'S RACE INTO THE RECORD BOOK

Steve Largent once dominated pro football's list of receiving records, but the former Seahawks great saw his three most prominent career marks broken last season by three different receivers—Jerry Rice, James Lofton, and Art Monk. In a few years, however, those three categories probably will again be ruled by one man: Rice. As the charts below show, if San Francisco's future Hall-of-Famer plays as long as Lofton has (14 seasons through 1992), he's likely to claim the two remaining career records by the middle of the decade, and by the time he retires Rice will have put all three records out of reach for some time to come.

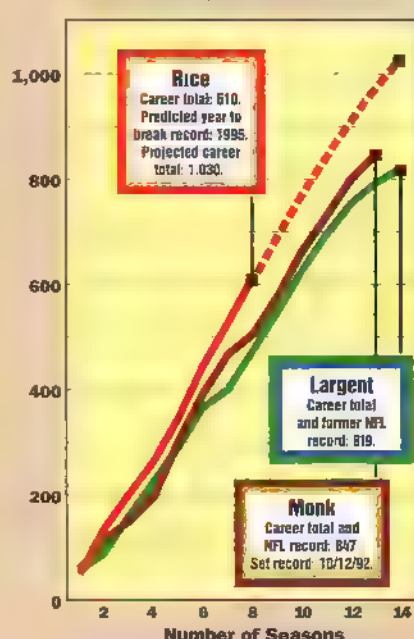
### TOUCHDOWN CATCHES



### RECEIVING YARDS



### RECEPTIONS



## SECOND-HALF UPS AND DOWNS

Some baseball players' stats fluctuate like the stock market: "Consistency" is not a word to describe their performance. The players below had the biggest changes—positive or negative—in their batting averages before and after the All-Star break last season (minimum 200 at-bats before and after the break):

### AMERICAN LEAGUE

#### Biggest Improvement

Player, '92 Team	1st Half	2nd Half	Diff.
Tim Lincecum, White Sox	.252	.346	.094
Shane Mack, Twins	.288	.348	.060
Kenny Lofton, Indians	.261	.312	.051
Greg Vaughn, Brewers	.204	.253	.049
Ken Griffey Jr., Mariners	.285	.330	.045

#### Biggest Decline

Player, '92 Team	1st Half	2nd Half	Diff.
Ruben Sierra, Rangers-A's	.306	.241	-.065
Dean Palmer, Rangers	.253	.197	-.056
Travis Fryman, Tigers	.291	.235	-.056
Leo Gomez, Orioles	.288	.237	-.051
Omar Vizquel, Mariners	.318	.277	-.041

### NATIONAL LEAGUE

#### Biggest Improvement

Player, '92 Team	1st Half	2nd Half	Diff.
Bip Roberts, Reds	.290	.369	.079
Brett Butler, Dodgers	.277	.351	.074
Joe Oliver, Reds	.238	.302	.064
Ryne Sandberg, Cubs	.279	.332	.053
Larry Walker, Expos	.278	.328	.050

#### Biggest Decline

Player, '92 Team	1st Half	2nd Half	Diff.
Tom Pagnozzi, Cardinals	.282	.208	-.074
Fred McGriff, Padres	.316	.253	-.063
John Kruk, Phillies	.346	.292	-.054
Darrin Jackson, Padres	.273	.220	-.053
Tony Fernandez, Padres	.294	.252	-.042

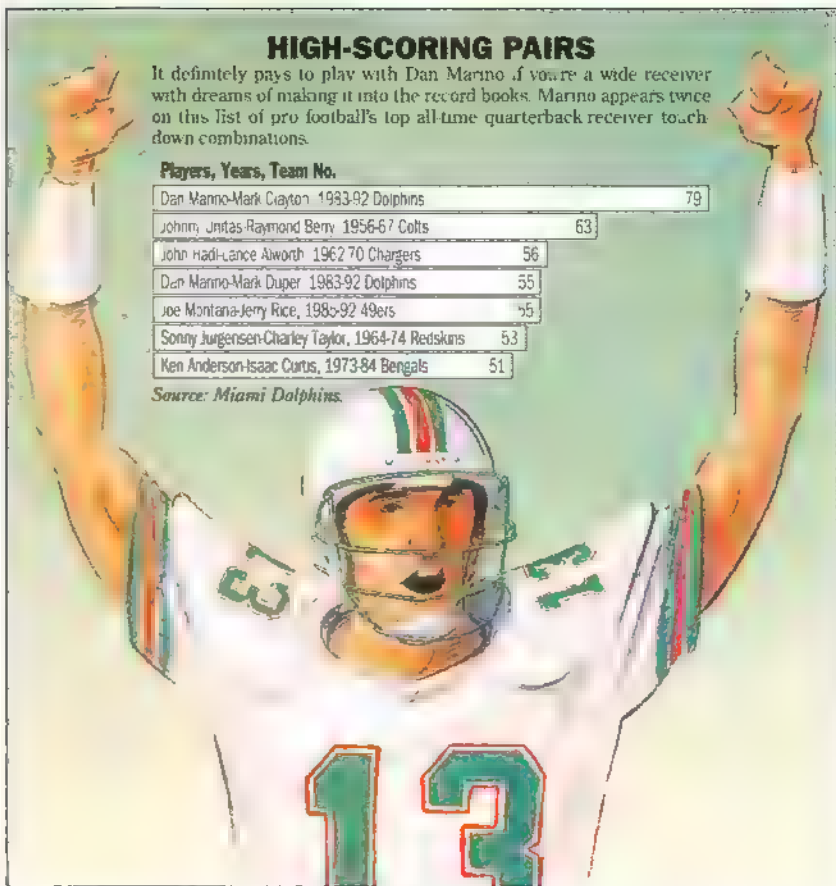
## HIGH-SCORING PAIRS

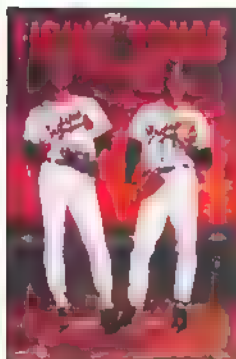
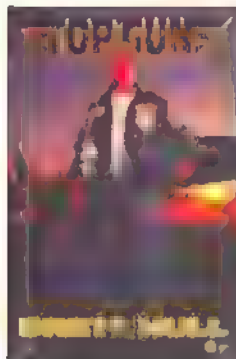
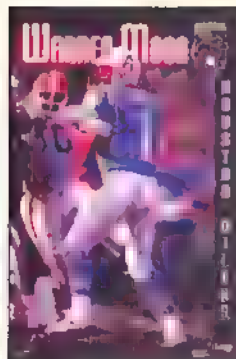
It definitely pays to play with Dan Marino if you're a wide receiver with dreams of making it into the record books. Marino appears twice on this list of pro football's top all-time quarterback receiver touchdown combinations.

### Players, Years, Team No.

Dan Marino-Mark Clayton, 1983-92 Dolphins	79
Johnny Unitas-Raymond Berry, 1956-67 Colts	63
John Hadji-Lance Alworth, 1962-70 Chargers	56
Dan Marino-Mark Duper, 1983-92 Dolphins	55
Joe Montana-Jerry Rice, 1980-92 49ers	55
Sonny Jurgensen-Charley Taylor, 1964-74 Redskins	53
Ken Anderson-Isaac Curtis, 1973-84 Bengals	51

Source: Miami Dolphins.





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### MLB FANTASY

ATLANTA BRAVES/John Smoltz & Tom Glavine - THE FIRING SQUAD  
BALTIMORE ORIOLES/Cal Ripken Jr. - MVP  
BOSTON RED SOX/Wade Boggs - OUT OF THIS WORLD  
BOSTON RED SOX/Mike Greenwell - GATOR TOUGH  
CHICAGO CUBS/Mark Grace - GRACE AND  
CHICAGO CUBS/Ryne Sandberg - BLUE HEAVEN  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Tim Lincecum, Robin Ventura, Jack McDowell, Bobby Thigpen & Steve Sax - FIELD OF DREAMS  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Tim Lincecum - ROCK OF AGES  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Frank Thomas - THE BIG HURT  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Robin Ventura - HOT CORNER  
DETROIT TIGERS/Cecil Fielder - BIG DADDY  
LOS ANGELES DODGERS/Darryl Strawberry, Eric Davis & Brett Butler - TRIPLE THREAT  
LOS ANGELES DODGERS/Darryl Strawberry - HOLLYWOOD  
MINNESOTA TWINS/Kirby Puckett - KIRBY  
NEW YORK METS/Bobby Bonilla - THE AMAZIN' MET  
OAKLAND ATHLETICS/Rickey Henderson - LETHAL WEAPON  
OAKLAND ATHLETICS/Rickey Henderson - THE MAN OF STEEL  
SEATTLE MARINERS/Ken Griffey Jr. - KID DYNAMITE  
SEATTLE MARINERS/Kevin Mitchell - THE MASTER BLASTER  
TEXAS RANGERS/Nolan Ryan - FLAMETHROWER  
TORONTO BLUE JAYS/Roberto Alomar - 2ND TO NONE

### NFL FANTASY

ATLANTA FALCONS/Deion Sanders - PRIME TIME  
BUFFALO BILLS/Thurman Thomas - THURMANATOR  
CHICAGO BEARS/Neal Anderson - BEAR NECESSITY  
CHICAGO BEARS/Mark Carrier - MONSTER OF THE MIDWAY  
CLEVELAND BROWNS/Bernie Kosar - AIR RAID  
DALLAS COWBOYS/Troy Aikman - STRONG ARM OF THE LAW  
DALLAS COWBOYS/Emmitt Smith - TEXAS TWISTER  
DALLAS COWBOYS/Emmitt Smith - CATCH 22  
DALLAS COWBOYS/Michael Irvin - PLAYMAKER  
DETROIT LIONS/Barry Sanders - THE SILVER STREAK  
GREEN BAY PACKERS/Don Majkowski - MAJMAN  
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS/Steve Ertman - HORSEPOWER  
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS/Deion Sanders - THE TRIBE  
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS/Derrick Thomas - SACRED GROUND  
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS/Christian Okoye - NIGERIAN NIGHTMARE  
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS/Bo Jackson - BLACK & BLUE  
LOS ANGELES RAIDERS/Todd Marinovich - BLACK SJNDAY  
MIAMI DOLPHINS/Mark Clayton & Ferrel Edmunds - AQUAMEN  
MIAMI DOLPHINS/Dan Marino - TROPICAL STORM  
MIAMI DOLPHINS/Jarvis Williams & Louis Oliver - 8-2 BOMBERS  
NEW YORK GIANTS/Carl Banks - SAFE DEPOSIT  
NEW YORK GIANTS/Lawrence Taylor, Carl Banks & Pepper Johnson - BADFEELAS  
NEW YORK GIANTS/Lawrence Taylor - INTIMIDATION  
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS/Joe Montana - SWEET SIXTEEN  
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS/Jerry Rice - SPEED OF LIGHT  
WASHINGTON REDSKINS/Gary Clark, Art Monk & Ricky Sanders - THE POSSE

### NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

ATLANTA FALCONS/Chris Miller  
BUFFALO BILLS/Jim Kelly  
CHICAGO BEARS/Jim Harbaugh  
CINCINNATI BENGALS/Boomer Esiason  
DALLAS COWBOYS/Troy Aikman  
DENVER BRONCOS/John Elway  
HOLSTON OLIVERS/Warren Moon  
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES/Randal Cunningham

### NHL FANTASY

BOSTON BRUINS/Ray Bourque - SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS/Chris Chelios & Jeremy Roenick - BLACK REIGN  
LOS ANGELES KINGS/Luc Robitaille - COOL HAND LUC  
LOS ANGELES KINGS/Wayne Gretzky - WAYNE'S WORLD  
NEW YORK RANGERS/Mike Messier - THE ICE WARRIOR  
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS/Jaromir Jagr - CZECHMATE  
ST. LOUIS BLUES/Brett Hull - TOP GUN  
ST. LOUIS BLUES/Brett Hull - THE GOLDEN BRETT  
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS/Grant Fuhr - THE PUCK STOPS HERE

### MLB ACTION CAPTION

ATLANTA BRAVES/Ron Gant - GONE WITH THE WIND  
ATLANTA BRAVES/Dave Justice - CHIEF JUSTICE  
ATLANTA BRAVES/NL CHAMPIONSHIP - CHOP TO THE TOP  
ATLANTA BRAVES/Deion Sanders - DEON!  
BALTIMORE ORIOLES/Brady Anderson - BRADY PUNCH!  
BOSTON RED SOX/Roger Clemens - ROCKET  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Bo Jackson - BACK IN BLACK  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Frank Thomas - THE HAMMER  
CLEVELAND INDIANS/Sandy Alomar, Jr. - ON THE WARPATH  
DETROIT TIGERS/Cecil Fielder - LONG DISTANCE OPERATOR  
HOUSTON ASTROS/Jeff Bagwell - RISING STAR  
KANSAS CITY ROYALS/Tom Gordon - FLASH  
LOS ANGELES OREL Hershiser - BULLDOG  
LOS ANGELES/Darryl Strawberry - SUDDEN IMPACT  
MINNESOTA TWINS/Scott Erickson - GREAT SCOTT  
MINNESOTA TWINS/Chuck Knoblauch - NEW KID ON THE BLOCK  
NEW YORK METS/Howard Johnson - HOJO  
NEW YORK YANKEES/Keyen Maas - THE BABY BOMBER  
OAKLAND ATHLETICS/Rickey Henderson - #339  
OAKLAND ATHLETICS/Mark McGwire - BIG MAC  
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS/Will Clark - THE NATURAL  
TEXAS RANGERS/Lou Franco - KING OF SWING  
TORONTO BLUE JAYS/Kelly Gruber - HOT CORNER  
TORONTO BLUE JAYS/Dave Winfield - NORTHERN EXPLOSION

### MLB LEGENDS (BLACK & WHITE ACTION)

CHICAGO CUBS/Ryan Sandberg - RYNO  
CHICAGO WHITE SOX/Carlton Fisk - IRON FISK  
MILWAUKEE BREWERS/Robin Yount - ROCKIN' ROBIN  
NEW YORK YANKEES/Don Mattingly - PRIDE OF THE YANKEES

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# THE GOOD DOCTOR

**D**on King is supposed to be promoting a big fight between a contender with an Olympic gold medal and an opponent with a lot of style. What's the fight?

S.W., NATCHEZ, MISS.

Oscar de la Hoya vs. Oscar de la Renta.

**K**irby Dar Dar was a hero in Syracuse's big 26-22 victory over Colorado last New Year's Day at the Fiesta Bowl, and we fans of the Orangemen are still pumped. How about an instant replay?

Q.I., SOLVAY, N.Y.

Dar Dar ran ran 100 100 yards yards with with a a Colorado Colorado kickoff kickoff.

**A**s he continues his sportscasting career on television, what is John Madden's ultimate goal?

V.L., YOAKUM, TEXAS

To make the All-Summerall team.

**W**hat's the name of that terribly sad movie in which a halfback leads a team to a 35-3 playoff lead at Buffalo, then watches as his team blows the lead, the game, the playoffs, and the whole season?

N.N., HILLIARD, OHIO

"Lorenzo's Oilers."

**N**ow a photograph of a pregnant Demi Moore is running on the cover of a golf magazine? Which one?

B.W., WOODSTOCK, VT.

Vanity Fairway.

**R**ick Mears shocked the sport when he retired from auto racing so unexpectedly. Why doesn't he want to drive anymore?

C.F., GROVER CITY, CALIF.

Fuel prices. It got so bad toward the end that Rick was avoiding his own pit crew and pulling into a self-serve.

**L**enny Dykstra supposedly keeps asking to be traded to St. Louis. How come?

K.Q., CABOOL, MO.

Because then he could be a Card player 24 hours a day.

**N**ow that he's lost both "Cheers" and his favorite football coach, how is actor George Wendt feeling these days?

N.D., STURGIS, MICH.

He's been going around singing a song first made famous by Jim Morrison and da Doors: "Dis is da end. Beautiful friend, da end."

**D**oc, how would you describe the way the New York Knicks play basketball?

C.O., HAMDEN, CONN.

The Knicks play basketball the way "Jaws" played fishing.

**D**oc, what's the most frightening NFL highlight film you've ever seen?

D.A., BEAR SPRING, TENN.

"Bram Stoker's Ditka."

**F**runk Reich saved Buffalo's bacon twice. Will he get another chance next season, or will he be benched again?

A.H., FRANKFORT, KY.

I'd say both, but I'm a little nervous about predicting the rise and fall of a third Reich.

**M**arge Schott's favorite fragrance is actually the same as Elizabeth Taylor's? What's it called?

S.Z., RISING SUN, IND.

"White Diamonds."

**I** know all about athlete's foot, but how does somebody get athlete's mouth?

S.I., CARTERET, N.J.

By using that other magazine's shoe phone.

**W**hich of America's newspapers sound like football expansion teams?

U.S., ARLINGTON, VA.



When the chips are down, Dykstra must be dealt with.

The Baltimore Sun, the Milwaukee Sentinel, The Charlotte Observer, and the fast-improving Austin American Statesman.

**I** hear Katerina Witt wants to make a comeback so she can compete at the next Winter Olympics in Norway. What's your diagnosis, Herr Doktor?

I.C., LITTLE FALLS, MINN.

I think the poor thing has spun in too many circles, if you get my drift.

**T**ell me about this new boxing movie starring MacCauley Culkin as a flyweight fighter.

J.H., LAKE ZURICH, ILL.

"Home Stallone" will star Culkin as Rocky (the Squirrel) Balboa, grandson of the former heavyweight champion. Accidentally left behind by his parents after a Las Vegas vacation, the boy bumps into two crooked promoters played by Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern, who, calling themselves "the Duva brothers," plan to make a fortune in underage boxing. In the end, Culkin goes 12 rounds with Fred Savage from "The Wonder Years" and has his broken nose treated by Doogie Howser, M.D.

**S**o what is your initial reaction when asked to ID the greatest NFL players ever?

A.A., ST. MARIES, IDAHO

Oh, Y.A. Tittle, O.J. Simpson, J.D. Hill, A.J. Duhe, J.T. Thomas, D.J. Dozier, E.J. Holub, I.M. Hipp, John L. Williams, and oh, I don't know, maybe Thurman N. Thomas.

**G**ive me an NBA tongue-twister to say three times fast so that I can become a big-time announcer.

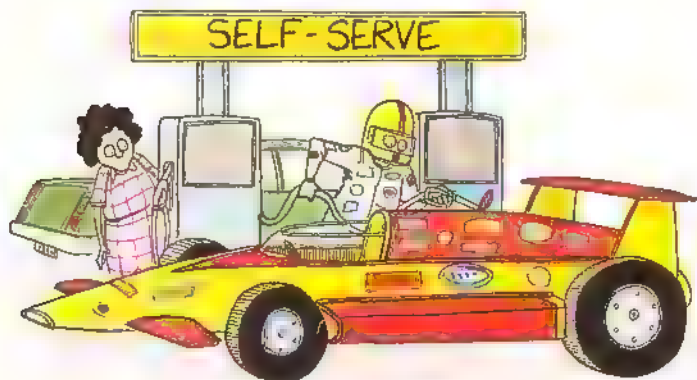
T.A., OSKALOOSA, IOWA

"Alaa Abdelnaby double-dribbles." "Alaa Abdelnaby double-dribbles." "Alaa Abdelnaby double-dribbles."

**C**ould you tell me who won that wild game of H-O-R-S-E between Michael Jordan and Larry Bird?

E.J., GRAND LEDGE, MICH.

Bird banked the ball off the Sears Tower



"There's the gas. Now where do they keep the squeegee?"



into the basket, giving Jordan an "R." Jordan swished a shot from a rowboat on Lake Michigan, which gave Bird an "S." Michael then put Larry away by blindfolding Cedric Ceballos and then dunking both the basketball and Ceballos simultaneously. (Bird dunked Ceballos but dropped the ball.)

**Y**ankees owner George Steinbrenner supposedly wrote a note to former slugger Reggie Jackson that said: "Dear Reggie: You're still the straw that stirs the drink. Come work for me." Work as what?

M.L., STARR KING, N.H.

Vendor.

**W**hat do tub-of-lard, out-of-shape boxers such as Michael Dokes open themselves up to?

L.L., SPRINGDALE, ARK.

Riddickule.

**R**ap music is Shaquille O'Neal's second love, right behind basketball. Where does O'Neal buy his stereo equipment?

L.G., LEEDS, ALA.

Radio Shaq.

**P**lease, Doc, could you name the favorite shoe brand worn by Jordan, Tyson, Ditka, Krzyzewski, Chang, Gartner, Irvin, Nunn, and Singletary.

M.D., BEECHER, ILL.

Mikey.

**A**ndre the Giant, bless him, died a few months ago. Where was he buried?

H.H., MOBRIDGE, S.D.

North and South Carolina.

**I**recently heard a baseball announcer refer to a bloop single as "a dying Quayle." Why does everyone keep showing such disrespect to our former vice president?

A.G., COOKEVILLE, TENN.

I don't know. It's pretty bush.

**P**icasso drew some pretty weird stuff when he was alive: grotesque beings, creatures with three eyes, and wild designs of all kinds. What was his ugliest creation?

P.W., ALAMEDA, N.M.

The uniforms of the Phoenix Suns.

**H**awaii is such a beautiful place—why did Troy Aikman leave the Pro Bowl early?

S.Y., SULPHUR, LA.

He heard Don Beebe was chasing him. ■

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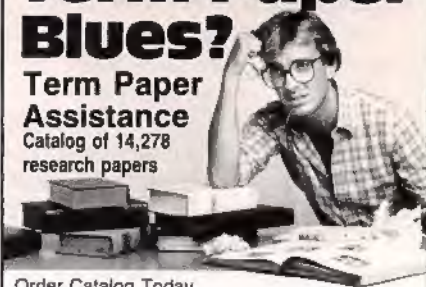
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By BRUCE HORNSBY

## The Senator and the Singer

**W**HEN I WAS A KID I wanted to be an Ivy League jock, just like Bill Bradley. About 11th grade or so I read a biography of Bradley by John McPhee entitled "A Sense of Where You Are," and it contained some important ideas that have always stayed with me. The book basically stated that whoever puts the most time into or is the most intense about his craft will perform the best—and that's a mindset I've always carried with me in my music.

Bill was a lot flashier in college than he was in the pros. In the film footage I've seen of him, he would take hook shots from 20 feet like guys take three-pointers nowadays. I remember when he dotted someone's eyes for 58 points to lead Princeton to victory in a Final Four consolation game, which also happened to be his last collegiate game.

Bradley always had a very disciplined practice regimen that became more evident when he started playing for the Knicks. He basically gave himself to the team, with an intense work ethic and team play that was infectious. He had the all-around game, and I related to him because like me when I played sports, he was not endowed with major quickness or great jumping ability but made the most of his ability.

During the Knicks' glory years in the early '70s, my family used to make a special trip from Virginia up to New York once a year to spend a weekend and go to a Knicks game. I'll never forget the time—I must have been 17 or 18—when I was able to get down to court-side while the Knicks were warming up. I stood about four feet from Bradley and watched him drill jumper after jumper from the corner. He made about 10 or 12 in a row, and his accu-



*Bradley's life has taught me that whoever is the most intense about his craft will perform the best.*

racy, and my being so close while he did it, made it unforgettable.

His pro career paralleled his Senate career in a sense: He was a hard worker who had his heart in the right place. He wasn't flashy, but he was a very solid player with the Knicks—a real intellect, on the court and later on the Senate floor.

Anyone who had followed Bill's career wasn't the least bit surprised when he entered politics after he retired from the NBA. He was always interested in the political process and even spent a summer working in a congressional office during his collegiate years. He was in Washington during the time when the Civil Rights Act was passed, which left a great impression on his view of Washington as a place where things can really get done and affect the country for the good. I admire him politically; I think he's fair-minded but tough. He and President Clinton are the only two people I've done political benefits for.

One day in 1987, out of the blue, I got a letter from Bradley on U.S. Senate stationery. He has a clipping service that

sends him copies of articles his name appears in, and I guess he had been inundated with stories about this guy Hornsby who had just broken out with a successful record and kept talking about him as a boyhood hero and inspiration; he probably thought, "I'd better check this out." I was sort of stunned by the letter, and for several months I didn't react to it, but I finally decided to give him a call. We got together and talked, and I found that he's a great guy. We've been friends ever since.

It really came full circle for me about three years ago. I was in New York playing gigs with my band and with the Grateful Dead. Bradley was campaigning for his 1990 Senate race, and he called me up and asked if I wanted to ride with him on his campaign run in New Jersey. I had the day off, so I said sure.

So we're riding around in his car, and all of a sudden Bill asks the driver, "Hey, how are we doing timewise for the next function?" The driver says we're fine, so Bill tells him to turn the car around and make a right, and we pull up right next to this playground where a bunch of people are playing basketball. Bill says, "C'mon, Bruce, let's go."

Of course, these guys are a little fazed to see this odd couple get out of the car, but Bill just says, "Hey, guys, how about Bruce and I taking you on in a little shooting game?" The guys say sure, and Bradley organizes a game: "OK, you go here, and you guys go here. We'll shoot from here, first one to seven." Bill and I took them on and beat them pretty good—I forgot who made more baskets, but maybe it was me.

So that was it. There was one point where I suddenly just flashed on it: "Hell, I'm shooting with Dollar Bill." It was a quick but great moment. ■

BRUCE HORNSBY has played with everyone from the Range to the Richmond and Virginia symphony orchestras. His latest album, "Harbor Lights," is climbing the charts.



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